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THE

MATHER FAMILY.

BY ENOCH POND,

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL, SEMINARY, BANGOR.

WRITTEN FOR THE MASS. SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY, AND REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

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INTRODUCTION.

No history can have such claims upon the sons and daughters of New England, as that of the early settlement of their own country. No biography should be so interesting to them, as that of their pious, pilgrim ancestors, who braved for them the dangers of the ocean and the forest, and prepared for them that "goodly heritage,"—that land of Bibles, and schools, and Sabbaths, in which it is their privilege to dwell. From youth to age, it becomes all in this land, to cherish the memory of their forefathers; to make themselves acquainted with their toils and sufferings; to dwell upon their virtues; and to guard and defend their reputation. It is not pretended that our ancestors were without foible or fault. To say this, would be to claim for them a degree of perfection which they utterly disclaimed for themselves. But it *should* be said, that

they were, in general, men of independent thought, of patient endurance, of high valor, of sterling integrity, whose morality, like their faith, was drawn fresh from the Bible, and whose holy, excellent characters it is much more easy to vindicate, than to copy.

In what follows, I propose to make my readers acquainted with a *single family*,—a family of *ministers*,—the distinguished family of the MATHERS. The patriarch of this family, it will be seen, was strictly one of *the pilgrims*. With his delicate young wife and infant children, he fled from ruthless persecution in his native land, and planted himself in what is now the beautiful town of Dorchester, but what then was little better than a savage wilderness, in the year 1636. Here he spent a laborious and useful life; and from him descended a race of ministers, extending through several generations, who were an ornament and blessing to both Englands, and whose name and fame will not soon be forgotten.

The most distinguished of his descendants were his son and grandson, Increase and Cotton Mather; the former the most venerable of the New England ministry, the latter the most extensively and variously learned. The volume is chiefly occupied with notices

of these men; partly, because they were the most deserving of notice, and also because the materials for sketching their lives and labors were the most abundant.

I have gone somewhat extensively, as will be seen, into a *vindication* of these excellent men from reproaches and aspersions which, in our own times, have been cast upon them. For doing this I make no apology. It is obviously the duty of the living to protect, so far as may be, the ashes of the dead. If it would be unpardonable to look coldly on, and see the sepulchres of the once learned and pious, useful and honorable, rudely torn open, and their dust trodden under foot; much more inexcusable is it to see the *characters* of the holy dead aspersed, and their motives impeached, and their names dishonored.

Those who are now active and useful among the living will soon have gone to the congregation of the dead. Other generations will stand up in their places, and look back upon them, as they now look back upon the generations of their fathers. And with what measure we mete, we may expect it will be measured to us again. If we feel no interest in protecting (so far as may be, in consistency with

truth and justice) the characters of those who have gone before us; who, may we expect, will feel an interest in protecting ours? Who will rise up and speak for *us*, when our lips are silent, our dust has mouldered, and we can no longer speak for ourselves?

I only add, that I have not written with a view to promote the interests of any religious sect or party. My simple object has been truth,—historical truth. If I have failed to exhibit this, it is only because, after much inquiry, I have failed to discover it. The Lord grant, that what of truth is exhibited in the following pages, may not fail of its appropriate influence upon our hearts and lives.

Theological Seminary,
Bangor, April 8, 1844.

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THE MATHER FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

RICHARD MATHER.

THE name of MATHER is one of frequent occurrence, and of distinguished honor, in the early history of New England. The first of this name, who came into the country, was the Rev. Richard Mather, long the faithful and successful minister of Dorchester, Mass. He was born of poor but respectable parents, in the small town of Lowton, Lancashire, England, A. D. 1596. He was early sent to a public school at Winwick, where he was boarded in the winter; but in the summer (so great was his desire for learning), he walked daily four miles to school, from his father's house. He suffered much, while at school, from the unreasonable strictness and severity of his teacher —so much, that he often entreated his father to take him away, and permit him to relinquish his studies altogether. But to this his father

would not consent, but encouraged him to persevere; and for his firmness in this particular, the world is under lasting obligations to the good man; and Mr. Mather himself did not cease to remember him with gratitude and honor, as long as he lived.

It is evidence of the proficiency of young Mather, and also of the confidence which his rigid master reposed in him, that he recommended him as teacher of a public school, at Toxteth Park, near Liverpool, when he was only fifteen years of age. He continued in this school several years, discharging the duties of preceptor with distinguished success, and perfecting himself, meanwhile, in those branches of study which he had occasion to teach. It was while he was here, that he became a subject of renewing grace. The principal means of his awakening was the strict and holy example of a Mr. Aspinwall, the gentleman with whom he boarded. "The exemplary walk of that holy man," says Cotton Mather, "caused many sad fears to arise in his own soul, that he was himself *out of the way;* which consideration, with his hearing a Mr. Harrison preach about regeneration, and his reading of Mr. Perkins' book, showing *how far a reprobate may go in religion,* were the means whereby

the God of heaven brought him into the state of the *new creature*. The troubles of soul which attended his new birth, were so exceedingly terrible, that he would often retire from his appointed meals into secret places, to lament his miseries; but after some time, the good Spirit of God healed his broken heart, and poured into it the consolations of his great and precious promises."

From this period, Mr. Mather seems to have had his mind fixed upon the holy ministry; and that he might prepare himself in the best manner for so great a work, he resolved to relinquish his school, and connect himself with the university at Oxford. His residence at Oxford could not have been more than two or three years; for in 1618, when he was only twenty-two years of age, he received an invitation to return to Toxteth, not as a schoolmaster, but as a minister of righteousness.

He was ordained, at the same time with several others, by Dr. Morton, bishop of Chester. When the ordination was over, the bishop took him aside, and addressed him in the following remarkable language: "I have an earnest request unto you, Mr. Mather, and you must not deny me. It is that *you would pray for me.* I know the prayers of such as fear God will avail much, and I take you to be of this number."

In 1624, two years after his settlement, Mr. Mather was married to an excellent lady, the daughter of Edmund Holt, Esq., of Bury, who was his assistant in his labors, and the partner of his pilgrimage, for more than thirty years.

During his ministry at Toxteth, Mr. Mather was abundant in labors, not only among his own people, but in the adjoining towns and villages. He preached once a fortnight at Prescott, and always seized the opportunity, which his attendance upon funerals afforded, for imparting instruction to the living. He frequently preached upon holidays; because, as he says, "there was then an opportunity to cast the net of the gospel among an abundance of fish." Great assemblies were then brought together, which otherwise would have been worse employed.

Having spent about fifteen years in the diligent and faithful performance of duties such as these, complaints were at length urged against him for his nonconformity; and in August, 1633, he was suspended from the ministry. By the intercession of friends his suspension was removed, after a few months; but it was again inflicted the next year, under circumstances which led him to despair of being ever more permitted to exercise his ministry in his native land.

About this time, Mr. Mather entered renewedly, and more thoroughly than ever before, upon the study of church polity, assisted by the writings of such men as Cartwright, Parker, Baines, and Ames. The result was, that he became a decided Congregationalist; and was known henceforth as the expounder and earnest defender of Congregational principles.

By the opening of the year 1635, Mr. Mather had made up his mind to join the goodly company of confessors and pilgrims, who were bidding adieu to their native land, and migrating to the distant shores of New England. Our fathers of that day reasoned after this manner: "The natural sun shines as pleasantly on America, as on England; and the sun of righteousness much more clearly. We are here treated in a manner that forfeits all claim upon our affection. Let us remove whither the providence of God calls us, and make that our country which will grant us (what is dearer than property or life) the liberty of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own consciences." During the twelve years of Archbishop Laud's administration, four thousand emigrants became planters in America. Neale informs us, that he had a list of seventy-seven divines, ordained in the church of England, who

became pastors of churches in America, before the year 1640.

Among these divines was the Rev. Richard Mather. Fleeing in disguise from his persecutors, who were in close pursuit of him, he embarked at Bristol, in May, 1635, and arrived with his family at Boston, in August of the same year. Near the end of his voyage, he encountered a terrible storm at sea, and was on the point of being swallowed up; but the Lord graciously preserved him, to be an ornament and blessing to the infant churches of New England.

Before his arrival, the church, which had been first planted at Dorchester, under the charge of Rev. Mr. Warham, had removed in a body, with its pastor, and settled at Windsor, Connecticut; leaving the remaining settlers at Dorchester in a destitute condition. Mr. Mather was almost immediately called to exercise his ministry among this people, and after due consultation, he concluded to accept their invitation. A new church was gathered, and he was regularly constituted its pastor, in August, 1636. And here he remained to the day of his death, a period of more than thirty-three years. He was earnestly solicited to return to his former charge in England, after the downfall of the

hierarchy, and the establishment of the commonwealth; but he rightly judged the Lord had called him to this country, and that this was the place where he was to spend his days.

The preaching of Mr. Mather is represented as being not only sound and instructive, but very direct and plain. He "studiously avoided," says his biographer, "obscure and foreign terms, and the unnecessary citation of Latin sentences; aiming to shoot his arrows, not over the heads, but into the hearts of his hearers. Yet so scripturally and powerfully did he preach his plain sermons, that Mr. Hooker used to say, "My brother Mather is a mighty man." He had great success of his labors, in both Englands, in converting many souls to God. One of the hearers of Mr. Mather, speaking of events which took place in Dorchester, soon after his settlement, says, "In those days, did God manifest his presence among us, in converting many souls, and in gathering his dear ones into church fellowship, by solemn covenant. Our hearts were taken off from old England, and set upon heaven. The discourse, not only of the aged, but of the youth also, was, not *How shall we go to England*? but, *How shall we go to heaven? Have I true grace wrought in my heart? Have I Christ,*

or no? O the many tears that have been shed in Dorchester meeting-house, at such times, both by those who declared God's work on their souls, and by those who heard them!"

Mr. Mather lived at a period, when much attention was given, both in this country and in England, to the subject of church government. Our fathers had little dissension or discussion about the *doctrines* of the gospel. These, having settled down on the good old scriptural foundation of Calvinism, had scarcely begun to be disputed. The doctrinal articles of the several reformed churches were remarkably at agreement. But many points of church government were still undecided. The sense of the inspired writers in regard to them had not been satisfactorily ascertained. To these, therefore, the minds of Christians, at that day, were directed, with a deeply interested attention. It is evidence of the standing of Mr. Mather among his cotemporaries, and of the estimation in which he was held, that his services were in continual requisition, in resolving and defending points of this nature. In the year 1639, thirty-two questions, relating to church government, were propounded and printed by the General Court, for the consideration of the ministers. Their answer to these

questions was prepared entirely by Mr. Mather. He was a prominent member of the Synod of 1648, and with his own hand drew up the substance of the celebrated Cambridge Platform of discipline, which was then adopted. He is said to have been a member of every synod that was convened in New England, during his residence in the country; and was actually the moderator of an ecclesiastical council, at the time of his death. This circumstance led one of his brethren to write for him the following epitaph: *Vixerat in synodis; moritur moderator in illis*;—among synods he lived; the moderator of one he died.

He was one of three ministers, who prepared the New England version of the Psalms;—a work more creditable to his piety and orthodoxy, than to his poetical inspiration. He wrote an answer to Mr. Davenport, of New Haven, on the subject of infant baptism,* with which old Mr. Higginson, of Salem, was so well pleased, that he said, "Mr. Mather is a pattern to all the answerers in the world." He was the author of several other works, chiefly (though not wholly) on his favorite subject of church order and discipline.

* The question between them did not respect the *validity* of infant baptism, but the lawfulness of baptizing any, except the children of church-members in full communion.

Mr. Mather was not only an active, but an eminently studious man. "So intent was he upon his beloved studies, that only the morning before he died, he importuned the friends that watched with him to help him into his study," where he had not been for several days, and where, he remarked, "my usual works and my books expect me. Is it not a lamentable thing that I should lose so much time?"

Up to the time of his last sickness, the health of Mr. Mather had been uninterruptedly good. He had never had occasion to call a physician; he had never been sick of any acute disease; nor in fifty years together had he been detained so much as one Lord's day from his public labors. His fatal disease was that terrible one, the stone, with which he was seized while attending an ecclesiastical council in Boston. He was able to be removed to his own house, but never able to leave it afterwards. In the paroxysms of his disease, he never shrieked, and but seldom groaned; but was a pattern of patience to all around him. He fortified his soul under suffering by reading Dr. Goodwin's Discourse upon Patience, which he continued to study to the day of his death. When any one asked, how he did; his usual answer was, *Far from well; yet far better than mine iniquities de-*

serve. He died in peace, April 22, 1669, aged seventy-three; having been, for more than fifty years, a preacher of righteousness.

It is remarkable that the last sermon which he preached to his people, being then in usual health, was from these words: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course: I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. 4: 6—8. The sermon before the last was from these words: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Job 14: 14. A sermon which he had not preached, but which was prepared previous to his last fatal attack, was from these words: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5: 1. It has long been a favorite opinion with some, that holy men have not unfrequently a presage of their approaching dissolution, before the event actually overtakes them. How far the facts above stated may go to confirm such an opinion, I leave for my readers to decide.

About twenty years previous to his death, Mr. Mather had been called to part with the wife of his youth,—a most excellent help-meet, "by whose discreet management of his affairs, he had been so released from all secular incumbrances, as to be wholly at liberty for the sacred employments of the ministry." She died with the following words on her lips, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

He was united in a second marriage with the widow of his distinguished ministerial brother, the Rev. John Cotton, of Boston. This lady survived him. By his first marriage, Mr. Mather had six sons, four of whom graduated at Harvard College, and were able and faithful ministers of Christ. It will be necessary to give some account of each of them, in detailing the history of the Mather family.

CHAPTER II.

SAMUEL MATHER.—NATHANIEL MATHER.—ELEAZER MATHER.

SAMUEL MATHER, the eldest of the sons of Rev. Richard Mather, was born in England, May 13, 1626, and was brought by his father to New England, when about nine years of age. He became hopefully pious in mere childhood, before he was six years old, and is represented as an extraordinary instance, not only of early developed intellectual ability, but of "discretion, seriousness, prayerfulness, and watchfulness." An Arabian commentator upon the Koran, reports, that when John Baptist was a child, the other boys asked him to play with them. But he refused, saying, *I was not sent into the world for sport.* Such seems to have been the thoughts of the child, Samuel Mather, so far as his thoughts were indicated by his general course of life.

He graduated at Harvard College in the year 1643, at the early age of seventeen; and was the first of the graduates who was there retained in the capacity of fellow or tutor. He

continued at Cambridge several years, under the instructive and powerful ministry of the Rev. Thomas Shepard;—a privilege which he greatly prized, and for which, after the death of Mr. Shepard, he felt himself called upon to make some compensation, by publishing a memoir of him to the world. In proof of the estimation in which Mr. Mather was held as a tutor, it is stated, that when he read his last lecture in the college-hall, nearly all the students were in tears, and that when he took his leave of the college, they actually put on badges of mourning!

When Mr. Mather began to preach, he spent some time with the church in Rowley, as an assistant to the venerable Ezekiel Rogers. He was earnestly importuned to settle with this church; but owing to his youth, or to some other cause, he did not think it to be his duty.

At the formation of the Second or North church in Boston, Mr. Mather was applied to to be their minister. He preached to them their first sermon, and continued with them through the winter following; but having a strong desire to visit England, which was his native land, he went thither in the year 1650.

In England, Mr. Mather's reputation as a preacher was even higher than it had been in

this country. Immediately on his arrival, he was appointed chaplain to the lord mayor of London, where his situation soon made him acquainted with some of the most eminent ministers in the kingdom. While in the metropolis, he was so often called upon to preach, that his health became seriously impaired, and he was thought to be in danger of losing his life. After a respite, however, his former vigor was restored; and we next hear of his preaching at Gravesend; and then at the cathedral, in the city of Exeter. After this, he was appointed chaplain of Magdalen College, Oxford, where he resided for a considerable time. From this situation, in which he seems to have been both useful and happy, he was called to accompany the English commissioners on their tour into Scotland, where he remained, publishing the gospel of the grace of God, for the space of two years.

In 1665, in connection with Dr. Harrison, Dr. Winter, and Mr. Charnock, he went with the lord deputy, Henry Cromwell, into Ireland. He was here appointed senior fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and joint pastor, with Dr. Winter, of the church of St. Nicholas. An opportunity was now presented for the exercise of charity, and for the display of that true

Christian liberality for which he was ever distinguised: for when his patron, the lord deputy, gave him a commission for the displacing of several Episcopal ministers, he refused to do it, saying, "I came into this country to preach the gospel, not to hinder others from preaching."

This was a measure of liberality on the part of Mr. Mather, which was not meted to him again; for almost immediately on the restoration of Charles II, he was himself suspended on a charge of sedition. This charge—a spiteful and malicious one—was founded on two discourses which he had preached, in opposition to Episcopal rites and ceremonies, and especially to the enforcing of them by the rigors of the law. When Mr. Mather was notified of his suspension, and of the groundless charge on it was based, he said, "If it be sedition to disturb the devil's kingdom, who rules by his antichristian ceremonies in the kingdom of darkness, as the Lord Jesus does by his own ordinances in his church, I may say that I did it before the Lord, who hath chosen me to be his minister; and if this be vile, *I will yet be more vile.*"

When this distinguished preacher could no longer exercise his ministry in Ireland, he returned to England, and established himself at

Burton Wood, Lancashire, where he continued about two years; until, with two thousand of his faithful brethren, he was ejected, by the terrible act of uniformity, in 1662. Perhaps nothing has ever occurred, in the whole history of Christianity, more truly honorable to our religion, than the conduct of these ejected ministers, on this trying occasion. There was, in the first place, a vast body of them, including the ablest and best men in the kingdom. They were in quiet possession of comfortable livings; and these, in most instances, constituted their *whole* living. They were surrounded with families, wives and children, whose earthly prospects and comforts all depended on their retaining their places. They were themselves dependent on their professional labors for a support, not having been trained to any other employment, nor knowing how to obtain a livelihood in any other way. And then all that was required of them was to stretch their consciences, more or less, so as to submit to the Episcopal rites and forms, and give their countenance to what they conceived to be superstitious and unwarrantable additions in the public worship of God. And yet *their consciences could not be stretched.* They knew how to make sacrifices, to embrace poverty, to endure

hardships and privations, to go, if it must be, to prison and to death; but to play the hypocrite, —to trifle with conscience,—to do what they verily believed would be displeasing to God, merely for the sake of gaining their bread,— they had no heart. They took the spoiling of their goods; they retired from their livings; they renounced at once their earthly all; and cast themselves, naked and dependent, but yet believing and confident, upon the grace and providence of their heavenly Father. Verily, here is evidence that there was some conscience still remaining in England; and that the revival of religion, which preceded and followed the overthrow of Laud's tyrannical administration, had not been altogether without good fruit.

The firmness of this noble band of confessors will appear in a stronger light, if contrasted with what took place in England a little more than a century subsequent to their ejectment. In the year 1772, about two hundred and fifty clergymen of the church of England, who held Unitarian sentiments (among whom were bishop Law and archdeacon Blackburn), petitioned Parliament for relief from the necessity of subscribing the articles of the church, on the ground that such subscription was against their consciences. But the House of Commons

rejected their petition, and the subscription was enforced as usual. Notwithstanding this, the petitioners, with the exception of a single individual (Mr. Lindsey), clung to the emoluments of a church, the doctrines of which they had publicly declared they no longer believed; and Mr. Lindsey was left to complain, that of the multitudes in the establishment who concurred in his sentiments, only *one* was found willing to contribute towards the expense of erecting him a chapel!

But it is time that we return to Mr. Mather. Being denied the privilege of preaching in England, except on conditions with which he could not in conscience comply, he returned to his former friends in Dublin, where he founded an Independent church, and set up a meeting in his own hired house. And here he continued, without further molestation, to the day of his death.

The Mr. Mather of whom we here speak, like several of the other members of his family, accomplished much as an author. He had occasion to go repeatedly into the Popish controversy, and write in defence of the Protestant religion. He preached and published against what he conceived to be the errors of the established church; while he was

ever disposed to treat godly ministers and members of that church with affection and respect. He published a work, entitled *Irenicum*, the design of which was to promote a greater degree of union and harmony among the three principal denominations of English Dissenters, the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists. This was an object on which his heart was much set, and to further which he did not labor altogether in vain. He wrote also on the prophecies of Scripture; and a volume of sermons on the types.

He had a controversy with an individual in Dublin, on a subject not altogether unlike some of the marvels of our own times. There was one Valentine Greatarick, who affirmed that he had the gift of healing diseases, by stroking and rubbing the diseased parts with his hands. Thousands of persons flocked to him from all parts of Ireland, some noblemen, some learned, some pious persons, and even ministers of the gospel. Mr. Mather had no faith in the impudent quack; and believing that great evils might result from the delusion, he prepared a discourse with a view to expose it. His manuscript was shown to some of the king's privy council in Ireland, by whom it was highly approved and applauded.

Mr. Mather was an example of fidelity in all the relative and social duties. To his honored father, whom he had left in this country, he was in the habit of sending valuable donations, year by year, as long as he lived. Of his younger brothers he was also mindful, and assisted materially in preparing them for usefulness. In the year 1656, he was married to a sister of Sir John Stevens, by whom he had several children, only one of whom survived him. His wife died when they had lived together about twelve years. Her closing scene was uncommonly peaceful and happy. Seeing her lie in her last agonies, her husband said to her, "You are soon going where there will be no more pain." "Ah yes," she replied, "and what is better, where there will be no more sin." When her sister said to her, "You are going to heaven," she answered, "I seem to be there already. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Mr. Mather survived his companion only about three years. He died in Dublin, Oct. 29, 1671, at the early age of forty-six, and was buried in the church of St. Nicholas, of which he had formerly been the pastor. The following epitaph was written for him, but whether actually inscribed on his tombstone,

it does not appear. "*Diù vixit, licet non diù fuit.*" He *lived* long, although he did not *continue* long.

As a preacher, Mr. Samuel Mather held the first rank. His name was known throughout the three kingdoms. His discourses were remarkable for clearness of reason and method, and for the majesty and authority with which they were uttered. It used to be said by critics of those times, "Mr. Charnock's invention, Dr. Harrison's expression, and Mr. Mather's logic, meeting together, would make the perfectest preacher in the world."

NATHANIEL MATHER.

This was the second son of the Rev. Richard Mather (of whom we have any account), and of him our materials enable us to present but a naked sketch. He was born in England, March 20, 1630, and was five years old when he came with his parents to this country. Like his brother Samuel, he was only seventeen years old, when he graduated at Harvard College. After he had entered the ministry, he followed his brother into England, and was presented, by the Protector Cromwell, to a living in Barnstable, in 1656. He continued

here until 1662, when he had the honor to be one of that noble band of two thousand, who were ejected for their non-conformity.

After this, he went into Holland, and was minister of an English congregation at Rotterdam. Upon the death of his brother Samuel, in 1671, he was invited to take charge of his bereaved and afflicted church in Dublin. How long he remained here, we are not informed; but he was afterwards pastor of a Congregational church in London, and one of the lecturers at Pinner's Hall. He died July 26, 1697, aged 67, and was interred in the burying-ground near Bunhill fields. On his tombstone, the traveler may still read a long Latin inscription, prepared by Dr. Watts, which ascribes to him a high character for genius, learning, piety, and ministerial fidelity.

He was the author of several works, the principal of which are, a treatise, entitled "The Righteousness of God by Faith, upon all who believe;" and a volume of sermons, preached at Pinner's Hall. The sermons were taken down in short-hand, as they were delivered, and published after his death.

The memorials of the Rev. Nathaniel Mather have chiefly perished. We have not the means of forming a judgment respecting him,

as we have in the case of his father and brothers. But from the several important stations which he occupied, the circles of piety in which he moved, the works which he published, and especially from the character which is given of him by Dr. Watts, and which he caused to be inscribed upon his tombstone, there can be no doubt that he was a learned, gifted, devoted and faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was his lot to live in a trying period,—an era of storm, revolution and conflict; but he bore the test; he kept the faith; and has gone to receive the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him in that day.

ELEAZER MATHER.

The next of the sons of the Rev. Richard Mather, who went into the ministry, was named Eleazer. He was born in Dorchester, May 13, 1637, and graduated at Harvard College, in 1656. He immediately commenced preaching, being at that time but nineteen years of age. He did not follow the example of his elder brothers, and seek a field of labor in the cities of the old world, but rather preferred the rude settlements of the new. He was the

first minister of Northampton, Mass. Having preached to the people about two years, a church was gathered, and he was ordained its pastor, June 23, 1658. He died July 24, 1669, after a ministry of only eleven years. He is represented as a "very zealous preacher and pious walker," who was instrumental in bringing many souls to the Saviour. His death was greatly lamented, not only by his own church, but by all the then infant churches on the Connecticut river.

As he approached the end of life, "he grew so manifestly ripe for heaven, in a holy, watchful, fruitful disposition," that many pious persons anticipated his speedy removal. The following are the last words that he wrote in his diary:—"This evening (July 10, 1669), I had some sweet longings of soul after God in Christ, according to the terms of the covenant of grace. The general and indefinite expression of the promise was an encouragement to me to look to Christ, that he would do that for *me*, which he has promised to do for *some*. Nor do I dare exclude myself; but if the Lord will help me, I will live at his feet, and accept of grace in his own way and time, through his power enabling me. Though I am dead, and without strength, help or hope in myself, yet

the Lord requireth nothing at my hands in *my own strength*, but that by his power I should look to him, to work all his works in me and for me."

The wife of Mr. Mather was the daughter of the Rev. John Warham, first minister of Dorchester, and afterwards first minister of Windsor, Conn. After his death she married his successor, the celebrated Solomon Stoddard; and was grandmother of the more celebrated metaphysician and divine, Jonathan Edwards. The only daughter of Mr. Mather was married to the Rev. John Williams, of Deerfield. She was carried into captivity, and cruelly murdered by the Indians, in the winter of 1704. Deerfield was, at this period, a frontier town, and much exposed to the incursions of the savages. In the night of Feb. 28th, a party of them broke into the house of Mr. Williams, murdered two of his children and a servant before his eyes, and compelled the rest of the family,—himself, his wife and the surviving children,—to set out immediately on their march for Canada. In wading a small river, the second day after their capture, Mrs. Williams fell down, from exhaustion and fatigue. Finding her unable to proceed farther, one of the Indians despatched

her with his hatchet. Mr. Williams survived his captivity, returned to Deerfield, and continued there till his death, in 1729.

It does not appear that the Rev. Eleazer Mather published any thing, while he lived. After his death, there was published, from his manuscripts, a work on the duties of Christian parents to their children, it being the substance of some of his last sermons.

CHAPTER III.

INCREASE MATHER.

INCREASE MATHER, the sixth and youngest son of the Rev. Richard Mather, was born at Dorchester, June 21, 1639. He became early a subject of divine grace, chiefly through the instrumentality of his pious mother. I extract the following from his own written account of his religious exercises, before and after the time of his conversion:—"The great care of my godly parents was to bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Whence I was kept from many visible outbreakings of sin, which else I had been guilty of, and had many good impressions of the Spirit of God upon me, even from my infancy. Nevertheless, I swam quietly in the stream of impiety and carnal security for several years, till it pleased God, in the year 1654, to visit me with a sore and dangerous sickness. For this I have many a time blessed the Lord, and I hope that I shall bless him for ever, for he made it the means of the first saving awakenings to my soul. I was brought now to have

solemn thoughts of death, and to see eternity before my eyes. I was brought, also, to a solemn and awakening sense of sin. After I recovered, the arrows of God still stuck fast in my heart, and I was followed with sore and grievous troubles in my mind for several months. In my distress, I resolved that I would not live in any known sin; and on examining my heart, I could not find any sin with which I was not heartily willing to part. I set also upon the practice of duty, and was constant in my secret devotions. Nevertheless, my wounded conscience remained with me, and God set my sins in order before me. He showed me the vanities of my childhood, and made me to possess the iniquities of my youth, so that my heart was ready to sink and die at the sight of them." This interesting youth, who was now not more than fifteen years of age, continues to speak of his distresses and temptations, and of the means which he employed to obtain deliverance. He kept frequent days of private fasting and supplication. "Towards the close of one of these days, being in an extremity of anguish because of sin, it was put into my heart that I must go and *throw myself down at the feet of my Saviour*, and see whether he would accept of me or no;

resolving that if he would accept me, then I would be his; but if not, then I would perish at his feet. So I came before him, with these words of Esther on my lips, '*If I perish, I perish.* Yet, Lord, if it must be so, I am resolved to perish at the feet of thy mercy. It is true, I am a dog, and unworthy of so much as a crumb. I have been a great sinner; but I am resolved that I will not offend any more. *I will be thine, thine only, and thine for ever.*' While I was thus praying and pleading, those words of Christ came into my mind, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.* I pleaded this precious promise with the Lord. After this, I had some comfortable persuasions that my sins were forgiven, and that the Lord would show me mercy. So I went on cheerfully in the ways of the Lord."

It is exceedingly interesting to read well-attested narratives such as this, and learn the methods which God pursues in humbling the proud heart of man, and bringing sinners to himself. It is interesting to learn the true nature of conversion, and to distinguish the important moment when the soul is born of God. The instant young Mather was willing to throw himself down, in unreserved submission, at the feet of his Saviour, his troubled

spirit began to find peace. And so it will be with every other anxious, convicted soul.

Mr. Mather was, at this time, a member of College, though for some unexplained reason, he was pursuing his studies out of College, under the direction of the Rev. John Norton, of Boston. He graduated at the same time with his brother Eleazer, in 1656. The following year he commenced preaching, when he was only eighteen years old. His first sermon was preached in Dorchester, under which his venerable father was so much affected, that he could scarcely pronounce the blessing, for tears.

It will be recollected that Mr. Mather had two brothers, settled ministers in Europe; Samuel, at Dublin, and Nathaniel, in England. At the earnest request of his eldest brother, he concluded to follow them to that field of labor. He sailed from Boston, July 3, 1657, and after a voyage of five weeks, was landed in England. His first year abroad was spent as a student in Trinity College, Dublin. After this, he preached with much acceptance in various places, until the troubles which followed the restoration of Charles II, admonished him to return to his native land.

He arrived in New England in the summer

of 1661, and the next year was married to Maria Cotton, only daughter of the celebrated John Cotton, of Boston. With her he was united more than fifty years, and was the father of ten children; all of whom (except one who died in infancy) gave early and convincing evidence of piety.

After repeated and earnest solicitation, and much misgiving on his own part, Mr. Mather consented to become the pastor of the Second or North church in Boston, and was ordained over it, May 27, 1664. In this situation he continued to the end of life,—a period of almost sixty years.

In 1681, Mr. Mather was elected to the presidency of Harvard College; and at the commencement following, he took the chair and conferred the degrees; but as his church were unwilling to grant him a dismission, the office was at length declined.

After the death of President Rogers, in 1685, Mr. Mather was again requested "to act as President, until a further settlement be made," with the understanding that he was to reside and preach in Boston, and spend a portion of his time at Cambridge during the week. In this way, his *official* connection with the College commenced; and it continued without

any material alteration (except that he afterwards became not merely the *acting*, but the *actual* President) for a period of about sixteen years.

This, as all who are acquainted with the history of New England know, was a time of great political anxiety and convulsion, in which both the College and its President necessarily and deeply shared. Towards the end of the year 1683, King Charles II demanded that the colonial charter of Massachusetts should be given up to him, threatening, in case of refusal, that a quo warranto against it should be prosecuted. The question before the people, was, whether they should voluntarily surrender their charter, or have it forcibly taken from them. Mr. Mather contended earnestly, both in public speeches and from the press, against the surrender of the charter; alleging that by voluntarily yielding it, the people made themselves accessary to the plots of their enemies against their liberties; but if it were forcibly taken from them, the responsibility would rest solely on their oppressors. By his efforts and influence in this matter, he incurred the deadly hostility of the infamous Edward Randolph, the emissary of the king, and afterwards the secretary of Sir Edmund Andros.

One method which Randolph took to injure Mr. Mather is too strongly characteristic of him to be wholly passed over. He forged a letter in the name of Mr. Mather, and caused it to be put into the hands of Sir Lionel Jenkins, the king's secretary of state, containing severe reflections upon the secretary, and praising certain individuals who were known to be obnoxious to the king. The forgery, however, was so palpable that Sir Lionel treated it with contempt. When this was told to Mr. Mather, he at once wrote to the secretary, disclaiming all knowledge of the letter, and expressing the opinion that Randolph wrote it. This excited the hatred of Randolph the more, and he brought two successive actions against Mr. Mather for defamation. But from both of them the good man escaped; in the first instance by being honorably acquitted, and in the second, by being sent out of the country, on an agency to England.

The original colonial charter of Massachusetts was vacated in 1685, and Sir Edmund Andros arrived in the capacity of governor, the following year. His secretary and chief counsellor was Edmund Randolph. The government of these men continued between two and three years; and to our venerable

fathers it was truly a *reign of terror*. Their religious rights were invaded and threatened; the liberty of the press was taken away; and their very titles to their free-holds were called in question. They were led seriously to consider, whether their lives would be long secure. In their distress and alarm, they determined to send an agent to England, to lay their case at the feet of their sovereign, King James II, and to implore protection and relief. In looking about them for a suitable person to whom to commit this trying and responsible agency, all eyes seemed to rest on Mr. Mather. But how was he to be sent? The government, with all its facilities and resources, was in the hands of their oppressors; who, so far from aiding, would certainly frustrate such an agency, if it lay in their power. The government did exert itself to the utmost to frustrate and put a stop to the measure. It was to prevent Mr. Mather from going, that the second action was brought against him for defaming Randolph; but his friends secreted him from his pursuers, and sent him out of the country in disguise.

After his arrival in England, Mr. Mather had an interview with King James, and obtained from him a promise to redress griev-

ances; but the revolution soon followed, which put an end to the intrigues and usurpations of James, and placed William and Mary on the throne. This revolution in the mother country was immediately followed by the overthrow of Andros' government in Massachusetts. The old charter was temporally revived, and two additional agents, Mr. Elisha Cook and Mr. Thomas Oakes, were sent out to England, to co-operate with Mr. Mather in his endeavors to promote the interests of the colonies. They had repeated interviews with King William and his ministers, in all which, they sought, as they were instructed to do, the legal restoration of their former charter, with such enlargements as the altered situation of the country required. And when, at length, this boon was despaired of, Mr. Mather was chiefly instrumental in procuring a new charter, by which the colonies of Massachusetts and Plymouth were united, and under which they both lived and prospered, down to the time of the American revolution. I ascribe the new charter chiefly to the agency of Mr. Mather, because he acted in this matter in opposition to the wishes, and without the consent, of his colleagues, who preferred rather to return with no charter, than to accept the one which King William offered them.

Nor was the procuring of the charter all that this indefatigable servant of the public accomplished, during the period of his agency in England. He watched over the interests of the other New England colonies, endeavoring to procure the restitution of their charters, and counteracting the designs of their enemies. A design was on foot to unite the colony of Plymouth with New York. This was frustrated through the efforts of Mr. Mather; for which he received a letter of thanks from the general court of Plymouth.

In England, as every where else, Mr. Mather deeply interested himself in the concerns of religion. He was engaged in drawing up heads of agreement, and in bringing about a union between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of England;—an object which would not, probably, have been accomplished, had it not been for his visit to that country.

Meanwhile, he was doing all in his power to promote the interests of Harvard College. He presented its claims before the king, and solicited for it the patronage of nobles, and of other wealthy individuals. He was instrumental, if not of first turning the thoughts of Mr. Hollis towards the College, at least of

encouraging and confirming him in his design of making it the object of his bounty.

It should be added, that during the four years he remained in England, he served his country gratis. "I never demanded," says he, "the least farthing as a recompense for the time I spent; and I procured donations to the province and the college, at least nine hundred pounds more than all the expenses of my agency came to."

Having obtained a charter of government (the best that could be obtained), and having been honored with the nomination of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and first Board of Council, who were to be appointed by the King, Mr. Mather left England in March, 1692, and arrived at Boston about the middle of May. The General Assembly was soon after convened, when "the speaker, in the name of the house of representatives, returned him thanks, for his faithful, painful, indefatigable endeavors to serve the country." The house also "appointed a day of solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God, through the province, for granting a safe return of his excellency the Governor, and the Rev. Mr. Increase Mather, who have industriously endeavored the service of this people, and brought over with them a

settlement of government, in which their Majesties have graciously given us distinguishing marks of their royal favor and goodness."

It is not to be disguised, however, that there was a pretty strong party in the province, who were dissatisfied with the results of Mr. Mather's agency, and with him for his instrumentality in procuring them. Some, in what had been the Plymouth colony, were dissatisfied that they were united with Massachusetts. Some were dissatisfied that, in his nominations to office, *their* names were omitted—showing that human nature at that period, was not essentially different from what it is now. But the principal ground of dissatisfaction was the charter itself. It was not the *old* charter which had been wrested from them; and then it contained some restrictions on what were conceived to be popular rights, which, by the former charter were secured; particularly the right of electing some of the higher officers of government from among themselves. It admits not of a doubt, however, at the present day, that Mr. Mather acted wisely in this most important business. The restoration of the former charter could not be obtained; and if it could, without important modifications, it would not have been adapted to the altered and enlarg-

ed state of the colony; and had the agents returned without any charter, the way had been open for some second Andros to come and revolutionize and oppress the country.

Mr. Mather assumed, indeed, a high responsibility, in consenting to act in so important a matter, without the concurrence of his colleagues, but the more credit is due to him on this account, and it belongs to posterity to award him this credit. It is impossible to conceive what New England might have been called to suffer,—what had been the fate of its churches, its schools, and its free institutions, had not the venerable Mather, with a far-sighted wisdom, and an unblenching firmness, seized the favorable opportunity, and accepted the charter which King William offered him. By this act, he lost somewhat of his former popularity, and exposed himself to no little reproach from a class of men—such as will always be found more or less, in every free country,—who prefer to find fault with the doings of others, rather than to incur responsibility themselves, and are fond of haranguing about popular rights; but he met the decided approbation of the wise and good among his cotemporaries; while historians of later date, and some, who have not been dis-

posed to mete out to him any thing more than even justice, have strongly approved of his conduct in this matter.

The following extract of a letter to the General Court at Boston, signed by twelve of the dissenting ministers of London, among whom were William Bates, John Howe, Samuel Annesly, and Isaac Chauncy, will show how the conduct of Mr. Mather was regarded at the time, on the other side of the water. "We give this testimony," say these men, "to our much esteemed and beloved brother, Mr. Increase Mather, that with inviolate integrity, excellent prudence, and unfainting diligence, he hath managed the great business committed to his trust. As he is instructed in the school of heaven to minister to the affairs of the soul, so he is furnished with a talent to transact affairs of state. His proceedings have been with a caution and circumspection correspondent to the weight of his commission. With courage and constancy he has pursued the noble scope of his employment; and understanding the true moment of things, has preferred the public good to the vain conceit of some, that more might have been obtained, if peremptorily insisted on. Considering the open opposition and secret arts that have been

used to frustrate the best endeavors for the interest of New England, the happy issue of these things is superior to our expectations. Your present charter secures liberty and property; and what is incomparably more, it secures the enjoyment of the blessed gospel in its purity and freedom. Although there is a restraint of your power in some things that were granted in the former charter, there are more ample privileges in other things, that may be of perpetual advantage to the colony. We doubt not but your faithful agent will receive a gracious reward above, and we hope his successful service will be welcomed with your entire approbation and grateful acceptance." Thus far the London dissenting ministers, who at that period felt an interest in New England almost as great as though they had been members of the colony.

President Quincy, in his late history of Harvard University, thus speaks of the efforts of Mr. Mather on this occasion. "Whatever opinions we may be compelled to entertain concerning his measures and motives at other times, his conduct in this great crisis of his country, entitles him to unqualified approbation. It is scarcely possible for a public agent to be placed in circumstances more trying and

critical; nor could any one have exhibited more sagacity and devotedness to the true interests of his constituents. By his wisdom and firmness in acceding to the new charter, and thus assuming a responsibility of the weightiest kind, in opposition to his colleagues in the agency, he saved his country apparently, from a rebellion, or a revolution, or from having a constitution imposed by the will of the transatlantic sovereign, and possibly at the point of the bayonet."*

I have dwelt the longer on this great public act of Mr. Mather, on account of the importance of the act itself, and because of its consequences, both to himself personally, and to New England.

During his absence from home, his ministerial duties were discharged by his son, Cotton Mather, who had, several years before, been ordained as his colleague. At the same time, the College was committed to the care and instruction of Mr. John Leverett, and Mr. William Brattle, tutors.

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* Vol. I, p. 123.

CHAPTER IV.

INCREASE MATHER—CONTINUED.

INCREASE MATHER, like his father, was connected with all the synods that were held in Massachusetts during his ministry. Of the famous reforming synod, so called, which was convened in 1679, he seems to have been the prime mover, as he was certainly an active and leading member. The result of the synod was drawn up with his own hand, and was commended by the General Court to the serious consideration of all the churches.

Mr. Mather was a strenuous supporter of the established faith and order of the New England churches; and when innovations were at any time attempted, they met from him a decided resistance. Near the close of the seventeenth century, an attempt was made to do away with the established practice of requiring of persons admitted to the Lord's table a particular account of their religious experience. The Rev. William Brattle, of Cambridge, was one of the promoters of this innovation. It was followed, in a little time, by the doctrine, openly pro-

mulgated by Mr. Stoddard and others, that *evidence of regeneration* is not to be required of candidates for the holy supper. This, Mr. Mather regarded as a very dangerous error, and opposed to it the whole weight of his influence and exertions. He wrote a preface to his son's life of Mitchell,* in which he says, that "doctrinal knowledge and outward blamelessness are *not* sufficient qualifications for admission to the church; but that practical confessions, or some relation of the work of conversion, are necessary." At a later period, he engaged in controversy with Mr. Stoddard on the same subject, showing the unscriptural character of the views he advocated, and their dangerous bearing on the churches of New England.

About the same period, another innovation was attempted, if indeed it be not part of the same, at which Mr. Mather was greatly troubled. It was the abandonment, by particular churches, of their separate, independent action in the choice of their pastors, and their consenting to vote only in connection with the

* Rev. Jonathan Mitchell, second pastor of the first church in Cambridge; a man of whom Richard Baxter said, "If an œcumenical council could be obtained, Mr. Mitchell were worthy to be its moderator."

congregations. In the year 1697, the church of which Mr. Mather was pastor sent "a letter of admonition to the church in Charlestown, for betraying the liberties of the churches, by putting into the hands of the whole inhabitants the choice of a minister." The same year, measures were taken for founding the church in Brattle Square, Boston, expressly excluding the distinct action of the church in the choice of a minister, and disclaiming "the requisition of any public relation of experiences, or any other examination than by the pastor," as the condition of being admitted to the Lord's supper. The Rev. Benjamin Colman, then a young man, and in England, was invited to become the first pastor of this church; and so confident were those who invited him that he could not be ordained over it in this country, that they advised him to obtain ordination in England.

The leaders in this innovation were Thomas Brattle, Esq., of Boston, Rev. William Brattle, of Cambridge, and Hon. John Leverett, afterwards President of Harvard College. I am the more particular in mentioning names, because I shall have occasion to refer to them again. The transaction was one which not only interested the feelings and dis-

tressed the heart of Mr. Mather at the time, but it materially affected his situation afterwards. At the request and through the mediation of neighboring ministers, and others, the members of the new church consented to modify very considerably their original plan, so that Mr. Mather met with them at the dedication of their house of worship, and even consented to preach on the occasion. Still, he was not satisfied with their proceedings; and he took occasion to express his dissatisfaction, in a treatise, published in the year 1700, entitled, "The Order of the Gospel professed by the Churches of New England justified." This gave rise to a reply, and that to a rejoinder, in which more heat and bitterness were manifested, on both sides, than comport with *our* notions of clerical decency and propriety.

Others besides the Mathers were induced to speak out on this occasion, and to utter a solemn note of warning to those who were bent upon departing from the established customs of the churches. It was at this time, that the venerable Higginson, of Salem, and Hubbard, of Ipswich, published their joint "Testimony to the Order of the Gospel in the Churches of New England;" in which they say, "If any who are given to change do rise up, to un-

hinge the well-established churches in this land, it will be the duty and interest of the churches to examine, whether the men of this trespass are more prayerful, more watchful, more zealous, more patient, more heavenly, more universally conscientious, and harder students, and better scholars, and more willing to be informed and advised, than those great and good men, who left unto the churches what they now enjoy. If they be not so, it will be wisdom for the children to forbear pulling down, with their own hands, the houses of God which were built by their wiser fathers, until they have better satisfaction."*

Although this controversy so far subsided, as to occasion no palpable breach of fellowship between those concerned in it,† still, a degree of coldness and distance was observable, and they seem to have been the objects of mutual suspicion and jealousy, during the greater part of their lives. This was the more unhappy for Mr. Mather, because those whose measures he had felt constrained to oppose, were the men chiefly concerned, at least for a time, in the direction and government of Harvard College.

* See preface to Cambridge Platform, p. 10.

† This controversy was not one about doctrines, but related only to questions of ecclesiastical order and discipline.

As before remarked, Mr. Mather returned from England, and the government of the province was organized under the new charter, in 1692. In the same year, he prepared a charter for the College, which received the sanction of the General Court. It was afterwards negatived by the king; but while it continued in force, and the corporation had authority under it to confer honorary degrees, they conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. It is remarkable, that this degree had never before been conferred in British America; nor was it conferred again, until, almost eighty years afterwards, it was bestowed on his grandson, Rev. Samuel Mather, and on Rev. Nathaniel Appleton, of Cambridge.

Repeated attempts were made, during the next seven or eight years, to procure a charter for the College, which should receive the sanction of the king; and in more than one instance, President Mather seemed on the point of embarking for England, with a view to the furtherance of this important object. But, for one cause or another, all these attempts failed, and the College continued in an unsettled and embarrassed state. During the troubles of this period, President Mather proposed, in repeated instances, to resign his office; but

the proposition was discouraged and resisted by the corporation. It was an object with the General Court to induce him to resign his pastoral charge, and to reside at Cambridge; but he could not be satisfied that this was his duty. To gratify the friends of the College, he did remove to Cambridge for a few months; but neither he nor his family seem to have been happy, nor were his people willing that he should be taken from them. Consequently, he soon returned to Boston.

It was this question of residence which finally closed his connection with the College. He seems not properly to have *resigned* his office; but on his refusing to reside at Cambridge, the duties of it passed out of his hands, and devolved on those of Rev. Samuel Willard, who was appointed vice-president.

That Dr. Mather was faithful and successful in the office of President, notwithstanding the many disadvantages under which the office was sustained, is testified by all who have written on the subject. Mr. Peirce, in his valuable History of Harvard University, says, "Dr. Mather's services at the College were assiduous and faithful. The moral and religious instruction of the students had his particular attention. The College appears to have been

in a flourishing condition, while he was at its head. Its numbers increased, and it was enriched, in no small degree, by the hand of munificence."*

President Quincy, also, says, "That Dr. Mather was well qualified for the office of President, and had conducted himself in it faithfully and laboriously, is attested by the history of the College, the language of the Legislature, and the acknowledgement of his cotemporaries."†

He was particularly concerned for the *spiritual* welfare of his pupils. He preached to them statedly every week, advised them as to what books they should read, and cautioned them against such as he considered hurtful. He used frequently to send for them separately into the library, and there pray and converse with them, warning them of the terrible consequences of continued impenitence; and charging them to turn from their sins and live. His farewell address to his pupils, on taking leave of the College, concludes as follows: "And now, my dear children, what shall I more say unto you? I hope that, as to many of you, (and O that it might be *all!*) I shall meet you

* Page 64. † Vol. I, p. 116.

with joy at the right hand of Christ, in the great day of his appearing and kingdom, when both you and I shall rejoice that he ever brought me, and placed me among you. But if any of you prove so miserable as to die in your sins, I earnestly protest unto you this day, that I shall testify against you before the Lord Jesus Christ, in that I have called upon you, both publicly and privately, to make sure of an interest in him. I am pure, therefore, from the blood of your souls; and if any of you (which mercy prevent) shall perish at the last, your blood shall be upon your own unhappy heads. The Lord is my witness, that I have done the part of a faithful father to you."

Dr. Mather lived, after he had closed his connection with the College, twenty-two years; during which time, in addition to all his other labors, he issued from the press not far from fifty distinct publications, the most of them on important practical subjects. He had less learning than his son, Cotton Mather, and a less exuberance of fancy; but more sound, practical judgment,—more common sense. His style will compare with that of the best English authors of the seventeenth century.

Dr. Mather was a laborious student all his days. Indeed, prayer and study may be said

to have constituted the business of his life. His people sometimes complained, that they saw him so little in their families. His son informs us, that he commonly spent *sixteen hours* of the twenty-four in the retirement of his study.

Of the character of his piety, a judgment may be formed from what has been already said. Still, it may not be improper to exhibit him more fully in this respect, by a few extracts from his private writings.

In a time of great perplexity and worldly embarrassment, he prays as follows: "Lord, if thou wilt provide for me, and answer my prayers, I will love thee, and thank thee, and serve thee. And if thou wilt *not* provide for me, still I will love thee, and bless thee, and serve thee. If thou wilt cast *me* off, I will not cast *thee* off. I *deserve* that thou shouldst cast *me* off, but thou, Lord, never deservedst ill at my hands."

In a season of deep darkness and spiritual desertion, he says, "I betook myself to Christ, and wept before him, saying, 'Lord Jesus, let me be destroyed, if thou canst find in thy heart to destroy a poor creature, who desires, above all things, to glorify thy name. Here I am before thee. Do to me, and with me, what

thou wilt. If thou wilt glorify thyself in my confusion, thy will be done. I have deserved that it should be so. But O, that thou wouldst have pity upon me!' After I had thus fled unto the Rock that is higher than I, I was revived."

A few days before his death, he prepared a written testimony, as to the *design* of the pilgrims in the settlement of these colonies, and the obligations that were resting upon their descendants to see this design carried out and consummated. This interesting paper concludes as follows: "And therefore, from the suburbs of that glorious world into which I am now entering, I earnestly testify unto the rising generation, that if they sinfully forsake the God, the hope, and the religious ways of their pious ancestors, the glorious Lord will severely punish their apostasy, and be terrible unto them from his holy places."

In the year 1715, Dr. Mather received a flattering request from the ministers of the province to go to England on their behalf, and lay the expressions of their loyalty at the feet of George I, on his accession to the throne; but this he thought proper to decline.

"His old age," says Mr. Peirce, "was blessed with the inestimable satisfaction which

flows from faith and hope, and from the vigorous exercise of the faculties and affections. He died, August 23, 1723, in the 85th year of his age, and was interred with all the honors due to his character, and to the rank he had so long held in society. He had been a preacher sixty-six years, during almost sixty of which he was pastor of the Old North Church in Boston."*

Dr. Elliot speaks of him as "the *father* of the New England clergy, whose name and character were held in veneration, not only by those who knew him, but by succeeding generations."

* History of Harvard University, p. 64.

CHAPTER V.

INCREASE MATHER, CONTINUED.—HIS CHARACTER VINDICATED.

It remains that we inquire, more particularly than we have done, into the propriety and correctness of some of the representations which have been made, in our own times, in regard to that venerable father in Israel, of whose life and character a brief sketch has been given.

He has been charged, in the first place, with an effective instrumentality in producing and prolonging the excitement in New England respecting witchcraft. "That both the Mathers," says President Quincy, "had an efficient agency in producing and prolonging that excitement, there can be, at this day, no possible question."* How Increase Mather could have had any agency in producing the excitement here referred to, it is hard to conceive. The strange appearances, at Salem

* History of Harvard University, Vol. I, p. 62.

village (now Danvers), commenced in February, 1692, when President Mather was in England, where he had constantly resided, and been most intensely occupied with the important subject of his agency, for nearly four years. How then could he have been instrumental in producing this excitement? And the charge of prolonging it is even more unfounded than that of producing it. He arrived at home, May 14, 1692, when the excitement was at its highest point. Shortly afterwards, as soon as it could possibly be prepared, he published his treatise, entitled "Cases of Conscience respecting Witchcraft;" in which, "with incomparable reason and reading," he refuted the received doctrine of spectral evidence, on the ground of which so many innocent persons had been tried and condemned. Immediately upon this, Gov. Phipps "pardoned such as had been condemned," and those that were accused, were, I believe, in all cases acquitted. "The confessors, too," says an eye-witness, "came as it were out of a dream wherein they had been fascinated; and the afflicted, in most instances, grew easy." It would seem from this account, which is the true one, that instead of contributing to prolong the excitement, President

Mather was a principal instrument in bringing it to a close.

That he was a believer in witchcraft, there can be no doubt; as who, in that age, whether learned or unlearned, physicians, ministers, or lawyers, were not believers in it? Even Thomas Brattle, who wrote a book in opposition to the proceedings of the times, was a believer in the reality of what was called witchcraft. He held that not only the afflicted, but most of the confessors, "were *possessed with the devil*, and therefore, not fit to be regarded, as to any thing they say of themselves or others." I use his own words here. But that Increase Mather had any instrumentality in producing or prolonging the excitement on this subject, we believe to be a groundless accusation. He is expressly mentioned by Mr. Brattle, as one of those that "utterly condemned" the proceedings of the courts, affirming that, if persisted in, they would "ruin and undo poor New England."

Another charge, or rather series of charges, against President Mather, has grown out of his treatment of Messrs. Brattle, Leverett, Colman, and others, in reference to the founding of Brattle Street Church. He is represented as acting, in this instance, under the influence of "excited temper and wounded

pride;" as exhibiting "great violence and personality—an ill-governed and overbearing spirit." He was roused "to such a height of indignation, as to lose all sense of prudence and character,—all patience and self-possession."* But after much attention to the subject, I can see no sufficient grounds for these heavy, wholesale accusations. That President Mather was conscientiously attached to the order of the New England churches, as established by the Cambridge Platform, and was disposed to discountenance any considerable departure from it, there can be no doubt. That he was especially dissatisfied with those alarming innovations which the Brattles and Mr. Leverett were laboring to introduce, is equally clear.† He would be led therefore,

*Quincy's History, Vol. I, pp. 133—143.

†"These men," says President Quincy, "refused to inquire into the regeneration of communicants; denied the necessity of explicit covenanting with God and the church; admitted that persons, not communicants, might elect pastors; referred admission to the sacraments, to the prudence and conscience of the minister; and held that admission to the pastoral relation might be valid, without the approbation of neighboring churches." History, Vol. I, p. 200. Now whatever President Quincy may think of these innovations, President Mather certainly deemed them of most alarming import. He saw that, if they were not discountenanced, these churches of New England—this "garden of the Lord," as our fathers termed it—would be undone.

not by "excited temper or wounded pride," but by the dictates of his conscience, and the fear of God, to oppose these innovations, and to discountenance the men who insisted on promoting them. He would labor by all fair means (and I have yet to learn that he used any other) to counteract the example and influence of these men, so far as their objectionable measures were concerned, and to keep the College from falling into their hands.

This was one cause, I have no doubt, which led President Mather, near the close of his connection with the College, to hesitate as to the duty of resigning his office. He had before wished, and repeatedly proposed to resign; but now he seemed to shrink back from it, well knowing into whose hands the institution was likely to fall. He could not think it right to leave his flock in Boston, and become a resident at Cambridge, but was willing to discharge the office of president, as he had done, to general acceptance, for sixteen years; and if the legislature would not consent to this, he preferred that they, not he, should take the responsibility of closing his connection with the College.

As little can it be doubted, that those who differed from him on questions of church order

were exerting, at this time, a secret influence to get the College out of his hands, hoping and expecting that it might fall into their own. It was owing, in a great measure, to their influence, that the legislature pursued the course it did. As Cotton Mather tells the story, his enemies "obtained a vote, that no man should act as president of the College, who did not reside at Cambridge," well knowing "that Dr. Mather would not remove his habitation from a loving people at Boston, to reside at Cambridge, while the College was as it then was;" i. e. without a charter, and consequently in an unsettled, embarrassed state; "and that in this way, they should get the College out of his hands." It should be borne in mind, that Mr. Leverett was, at this time, a leading member, and I believe the speaker, of the house of representatives.

I will not say that in President Mather's controversial publications, growing out of what he honestly conceived to be the irregular consitution of the Brattle Street Church, there are no expressions which we may think unwarrantably severe. But thus much may at least be said; the controversy was conducted with more decency on his part, than on the other; and the severe expressions, on both

sides are to be attributed more, probably, to the fashion of the age, than to the spirit and character of the men. And as Mr. Peirce justly remarks, "it is unfair to take a man out of his own age, and try him by the standard of another."

It must be said, also, in relation to this whole controversy, that the points for which President Mather contended, though not strictly points of doctrine, were yet of a vitally important character. So he regarded them; and so they are regarded by evangelical Christians at the present day. He saw that if the principles of Stoddard, and the Brattles, and Leverett, and many others, in regard to the admission of persons to the church, were generally adopted; the churches would, ere-long, be filled up with unconverted members, and even the pulpits with unconverted ministers, and that the vital power of the gospel, if not its most essential truths, would be lost sight of and discarded. He saw that if the churches gave up the primitive, inestimable right of electing, independently, their own ministers, very soon they would have ministers placed over them, from whose unholy influence they must flee away, or under it they must consent to remain and be corrupted.

The experience of almost a century and a half has shown that President Mather's forebodings were well founded. In regard to many of the pilgrim churches, the worst that he feared from the mistakes of his cotemporaries has been more than realized. And that the desolations resulting in part from the innovations then made, had not an earlier and a wider spread, is owing, in a great degree, to the resistance which he opposed to them. So that now, after the lapse of five generations, we may look back upon Increase Mather as the man, who, in the face of much obloquy and personal sacrifice, not only gave to Massachusetts a constitution of government, but saved the great body of her churches from a tide of ruin which was beginning to set in, and threatening to roll over them.

Another of the objections to Dr. Mather, relates to his treatment of Governor Dudley. On the 12th of September, 1707, Vice President Willard died; and in the month following, John Leverett was elected President of Harvard College. There can be no doubt that the election was displeasing to Dr. Mather. It is now pretended that he expected himself to be restored to the presidency, or at least, that the office would have been given to his

son; and that he was so angry with Governor Dudley for defeating his own, or his son's appointment, and favoring the election of Mr. Leverett, that he immediately addressed to the governor a letter, "breathing a spirit of abuse and virulence, of which the records of party animosity contain but few parallels."*

With respect to this letter to Gov. Dudley, I remark, in the first place, that there is not in it a single word, or the remotest allusion, touching any expectations of the writer as to the presidency, either for himself, or for his son. Neither does it contain the slightest allusion to the election of Mr. Leverett, or to any influence which the governor may be supposed to have exerted in favor of that event. Indeed, the letter contains but a single reference to the College, in any way; and that is quite distinct and remote from the subject of the presidency.

In order that we may understand the full purport of this famous letter, it is necessary to know something of the history and character of Governer Dudley. He was the son of Thomas Dudley, one of the first settlers and governors of Massachusetts colony, and was

* Quincy's History, Vol. I, p. 201.

graduated at Harvard College in 1665. In his youth he seemed to be truly religious, and used to speak of Dr. Mather as his "spiritual father." He was educated for the Christian ministry, and was once talked of as colleague with Dr. Mather in Boston. He soon engaged, however, in civil pursuits, after which his religious impressions seem to have presented no obstacle in the way of his ambition. He was high in favor with the oppressors of the colony, at the time when the charter was taken away. He was the first officer in the government before Andros arrived. Under *him*, he was President of the Council, and Chief Justice, and was deeply concerned in all the oppressions of these troublous times. In the subsequent revolution, when Andros and his creatures were imprisoned, Dudley was kept in close confinement, and was treated even more harshly than any of them, as being thought more inexcusably guilty. Had it not been for the interposition of Cotton Mather (for Increase was then in England), he would probably have been torn in pieces by the violence of the mob. He was ordered to England to give an account of himself, in 1689; and the next year he was made Chief Justice of New York.

While Sir William Phipps was Governor of Massachusetts, Dudley exerted all his influence and cunning to injure him; hoping to succeed him in the government, if by any means it could be got out of his hands. During the short administration of Lord Bellamont, he was intriguing to secure favor, both in old England and New, that, if possible, he might be again seated in the chair of his native state. He had always professed a great regard for the Mathers; he attended frequently, if not statedly on their ministry, when in Boston;* and he had now the address to procure a letter from Cotton Mather to King William, which had much influence in his favor. He was appointed Governor of Massachusetts in the year 1702, in which situation he continued, during the next fourteen years. "The first seven years," says Elliot, "were spent in debates with the house of representatives, or in private disputes with men who ceased not to accuse him of artifice and deception, of arbitrary con-

* In a letter to Increase Mather, dated May 17, 1686, Dudley says, "For the things of my *soul* I have these many years hung upon your lips, and ever shall; and in *civil* things, I am desirous you may know, with all plainness, my reasons of procedure, and that they may be satisfactory to you."

duct, and of enmity even to those privileges which they had obtained by the new charter." It was near the close of these first seven years, that Dr. Mather, considering the relations that had subsisted between himself and the governor, and the favors which he had conferred upon him, and being wearied and disgusted with the course of his administration, addressed to him the letter of which we speak. It is a plain, searching, faithful letter, such as few governors of Dudley's character ever received, and for which he had much more reason to be grateful than to be angry. It is too long to be published entire in these pages. A brief analysis is all that I can at present offer.

In the first place, Dr. Mather expresses his fears that the governor had been guilty of receiving bribes. And he mentions several instances of this nature which had been sworn to by some of the most respectable men in the province.

Next, he acquaints the governor with his fears, that "he had been contriving to destroy the charter privileges of the province," and introduce another government like that of Andros. And Mr. Bancroft, in his History of the United States, assures us that this was true. He says expressly that "Gov. Dudley, and for

a season his son also, became the active opponents of the chartered liberties of New England, endeavoring to effect their overthrow, and the establishment of a general government, as in the days of Andros."* It was about this time, that a letter from Mr. Paul Dudley, son of the governor, addressed to the English court, was intercepted, in which he says, "This country (New England) will never be worth living in, for lawyers and gentlemen, till the charter is taken away. My father and I sometimes talk of the queen's establishing a court of chancery in this country."

In the third place, Dr. Mather expresses to the governor his fears, that he had been hypocritical and inconsistent, in respect to the College; particularly (if I understand him) in his attempts to revive, by mere provincial authority, the old college charter of 1650, which he had often before represented as dead, and never to be revived but by the assent of the king. And President Quincy is of the same opinion with Dr. Mather, on this subject. He represents this act of Dudley, in reviving the old college charter, as "irreconcilable with the duties growing out of the relation in which he

* Vol. III, p. 100.

stood to the British crown," and in contradiction to the "principles which he had openly asserted and maintained."*

In the fourth place, Dr. Mather says, "I am afraid that the guilt of innocent blood is still crying in the ears of the Lord against you. I mean the blood of Leisler and Milburn." These men (Leisler and Milburn) were concerned in the revolution in New York, at the time of the accession of William and Mary; and were publicly executed, under sentence of Dudley, while he was Chief Justice of that province. Lord Bellamont afterwards declared, that "these men were not only murdered, but barbarously murdered." Mr. Bancroft, in his History, also speaks of their execution as "judicial murder."

Dr. Mather's fifth and last fear for the governor was, that "the Lord is offended with you, in that you ordinarily forsake the worship of God, in the holy church with which you are connected, in the afternoon of the Lord's day; and spend the whole time, after the public exercise, with some persons reputed very ungodly men."

In conclusion, Dr. Mather says, "How glad

* History, Vol. I, p. 159.

should I be, if I could receive satisfaction, that my fears of your being faulty in the matters I have faithfully mentioned to you are groundless. But if it be otherwise, I am under pressure of conscience to bear a public testimony, without respect of persons; and I shall rejoice if it may be my dying testimony. I am now aged, expecting and longing for my departure out of the world every day. I trust in Christ that, when I am gone, I shall obtain a good report of my having been faithful before him. To his mercy I commend you," &c.

Such is the famous letter of Increase Mather to Governor Dudley; a letter which, it has been recently affirmed, and that, too, on high authority, "breathes a spirit of *abuse* and *virulence*, of which the records of party animosity contain but few parallels." I have only to say, that I think not so; and I doubt not that this community, when they come to understand the subject, will wonder that such language could have been used respecting it. For who, I must ask again, was this Governor Dudley? What was his character, in the estimation both of his cotemporaries, and of those who have come after him? Only a year before the letter of Dr. Mather was written, a memorial was presented to "the Queen's most excellent

majesty," and signed by twenty of the more distinguished friends of New England, some in this country and some in London, accusing him of nothing less than *treason*,—the supplying of the open enemies of his country with provisions and ammunition.*

Gov. Hutchinson says of Dudley, "Ambition was his ruling passion; and, perhaps, like Cæsar, he had rather be the first man in New England, than the second in Old."* Mr. Bradford represents him as "one covetous both of power and wealth, and as probably seeking for the former as the best means of obtaining the latter." Mr. Bancroft says, "The character of Dudley was that of profound selfishness." He "loved neither freedom, nor his native land." He "is left without one to palliate his selfishness."† It was no disgrace to Dr. Mather, that he lost the favor of such a man; and that, before quite abandoning him, he was disposed to deal with him in a plain and faithful manner. His letter to Dudley is one of the last things that should be seized upon, as furnishing matter of objection to his character.

It is further objected to Dr. Mather, that he

* Hutchinson's Hist. of Mass., Vol. II, pp. 145, 194.
† Hist. of United States, Vol. III, p. 100.

was, to a great and even ridiculous extent, the dupe of his own impressions,—impressions received for the most part, in prayer, and which he deemed of an almost supernatural character. The impression of this kind which has been chiefly commented on, and in the issue of which he was disappointed, was one which he cherished from about the year 1693 to the end of the century, in reference to an anticipated return to England. It was often impressed on him during this period, that "God would return him to England, and there give him an opportunity, in some way, greatly to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." He seems to have desired such an event; and in several instances the way was well-nigh opened for the accomplishment of his wishes. But from various causes, he was disappointed. His accusers have seized hold of these impressions, and made them matters of ridicule and reproach. They talk of his "genufluxions, and prostrations, and spiritual elevations," and "glorious, heart-melting persuasions," in a manner which we deem offensive both to piety and taste; and finally resolve the whole into "the natural wishes of his own heart,—the cravings of an ambitious spirit."*

*Quincy's History, Vol. I, pp. 81—109.

In reference to the subject here suggested, I remark, in the first place, that the current opinions and language of our fathers, in respect to various matters, were so different from ours, that if we are disposed to take them out of their own age, and from among their own cotemporaries, and judge of them by our standards, it is not difficult to make them appear ridiculous. For example, if all that the apostolic Elliot said and wrote, with regard to the abomination of wearing wigs and long hair, were collected together, how easy it would be to turn him into ridicule; or if Governor Winthrop's account of the terrible judgment which befell Mrs. Dyer, in consequence of her having imbibed the errors of Mrs. Hutchinson, were copied out, and held prominently up to the gaze and disgust of modern eyes, not only the excellent Governor, but many of his cotemporaries, might be made to appear ridiculous enough. But it may be questioned whether such a procedure would be fair or generous; and I have the same scruples as to the propriety of ransacking the diaries of the Mathers, in search of materials for ridicule and reproach, and especially for turning into ridicule their more secret and solemn acts of devotion.

But to come nearer to the serious subject in hand. While I dissent entirely from much that has been written, in our own times, in respect to what has been called "the progress of faith," as being not only unscriptural, but of dangerous tendency; I still believe that there is such a thing as communion with God in prayer; yes, internal heart-melting heart-dissolving communion;—such as the venerable Mather sometimes enjoyed, when he prostrated himself in secret before God, and wet his study floor with tears. I believe, too, that Christians who abound in prayer, have sometimes such sensible assistance in their supplications for particular favors, that they can hardly resist the conclusion, when they rise from the duty, that the things prayed for will be bestowed. For they reason thus: God would not have afforded me such *special* assistance in praying for this or that event, if he had not intended to hear the prayer, and grant the request. I see nothing enthusiastical or unreasonable in a conclusion such as this; though, to be sure, we are not infallible in judgments of this nature, and they should be formed and followed with much prudence and caution.

I regard the two Mathers, father and son, as eminently persons of prayer. They observed

more private fasts and vigils, and spent more time in their secret devotions,—I believe far more,—than was common with Christians, then or now. And not only so, there was, if we may judge from their private writings, a *spirit*, a *fervor* in their devotions,—a nearness and intimacy of communion with God,—which has been rarely attained in this world of sin. These men believed, not only in the duty, but in the *efficacy* of prayer. They expected *answers* to their prayers. Not unfrequently, they had strong impressions, amounting almost to an assurance, that certain events in providence were about to take place. And in some instances, they *did* take place. Men may account for such dispensations as they will; of the fact of their occurrence there can be no doubt. To give but a single example. In the month of November, 1676, Dr. Mather had it strongly impressed on his mind, that Boston was about to be visited with a destructive fire. He spoke of it in his sermons, and publicly warned the people of it two Sabbaths in succession. On the night following the second Sabbath, the fire broke out; his meeting-house was laid in ashes; and "whole streets were consumed in the devouring flames."

Still, Dr. Mather was liable to be deceived

by his impressions; and in regard to his anticipated return to England, he certainly was deceived. Yet I see nothing in this, which should justly expose him to ridicule or reproach. This particular impression seems to have exerted little or no influence,—certainly no *bad* influence on his conduct. He might have returned to England, in several instances, if he had been so disposed;—but the way in providence did not seem to him to be open. His duty was not plain. And until it *was* plain, his impression had no influence to induce him to go. His recorded feeling in reference to the whole matter was, "Lord, if it will be more to *thy glory* that I should go to England, than for me to continue here in this land, then let me go; otherwise not." "The Lord overrule this affair to his own glory, and so as that I may see his holy hand pointing me what I should do." Here, surely, is an unfeigned and entire submission to the will of God;—a feeling as unlike as possible to the restless longings of a selfish mind,—"the cravings of an ambitious spirit."

I cannot conclude the discussion of this topic in words more appropriate than those of Cotton Mather himself. "Christians, reproach not a *particular faith*, as if there never were a gra-

cious work of heaven in it. But yet be cautioned against laying too much stress upon it, lest ye find yourselves incautiously plunged into a hope that will make ashamed. A particular faith *may be* a work of God; but the counterfeits of this jewel are so very fine, that it will require a judgment almost more than human to discern them. It is best that you should be content with the ordinary satisfaction of praying and waiting for the blessings of God, in such pious resignations to *his* will, and annihilations of *your own*, as an uncertainty about issues would most properly lead you to."*

Our modern accusers of Dr. Mather charge him with being influenced, almost perpetually, by worldly, selfish, and ambitious motives. And they think themselves fully entitled to do this, because, in consequence of having access to his diary, they know the motives by which he was influenced. "Of the motives and master-passions of his eventful presidency, we are enabled to speak," say they, "with great certainty." "President Mather and his son both kept diaries, in which they have recorded their motives and purposes; so that, in relation to either, there can hardly be any mistake."† In

* Remarkables, &c., p. 195.

† Quincy's History, Vol. I, p. 56.

reference to this sort of diary-evidence, of which so much use has been made, I feel bound, in passing, to offer a few remarks. And I ask, in the first place, is it quite fair and honorable to bring out in this way, the diaries of distinguished men? These diaries were written, not for the public eye, but for their own private inspection; or at most, for the inspection of some few personal, family friends. Is it right, then, to lay hold upon them, and drag them out before the public, and turn them to a use for which they never were intended? Most men say things at their own firesides, and in presence of their families, which they would not wish to have published to the world. And if some impertinent listener were to treasure them up, and make them public, who would not be disposed to complain of the injury? Most men write letters, and maintain in this way a social, confidential correspondence with absent friends. And who would be willing that, some hundred and fifty years after he was dead, the whole body of his more private letters, or the more objectionable parts of them, should be spread out to public view?

Almost all ministers, and many laymen, in the days of the Mathers, were in the habit of keeping diaries; in which they recorded their

private thoughts, their religious impressions, and the more important transactions of their lives. But can it be right, at this day, for their successors, their descendants, those into whose hands their private papers have fallen, to make an indiscriminate exhibition of these papers to the world? As well might they strip their venerable ancestors of their wigs and bands, and send them into the pulpit in their shirts and nightgowns.

Besides; the real import of the diaries of evangelical Christians is not unfrequently misunderstood, especially by those who do not sympathize with them in their religious feelings and views. Such Christians record, in their closets, the sense they feel of their many imperfections, their great sinfulness in the sight of God; and persons who have less conscience of sin than they, and less sorrow for it, infer from the record, either that they were gross hypocrites, or that they had secretly been guilty of abominable crimes. Thus Boswell, finding in Johnson's diary frequent intimations of his great sinfulness, and the depth of his self-abasement, inferred that he must have been secretly a very wicked man. And Mr. Bancroft has no doubt, from Cotton Mather's account of his temptations and repentings, that

his conscience troubled him for the part he had taken against the witches.*

I once knew a man, who bitterly hated what he termed "the Evangelicals;" and because he had little else to allege against them, he used to appeal, for evidence, to their prayers. "Go and hear the wretches pray. We need no farther evidence of guilt. They confess themselves to have committed the most abominable crimes." There was about as much sense and justice in this kind of reasoning, as in the conclusions which are sometimes drawn from the humble confessions of Christians in their diaries. Because Job "abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes;" and Isaiah confessed himself to be "a man of unclean lips;" and Paul groaned habitually under a conscious burthen of sin, is it to be inferred that these men were hypocrites; or that they lived in the indulgence of palpable wickedness?

But I have not yet done with this species of diary evidence. When the diary does not treat of religious experience, but of the common affairs of life, there is reason to receive the testimony with much caution and allowance. For what is this testimony? It is not that of an individual under oath. Neither is it the

* History of United States, Vol. III, p. 98.

word of one who is writing a history,—writing for posterity,—stating what he has thoroughly inquired into, and knows to be fact. In the sensible language of a reviewer in the North American, "The writer of a diary puts down his present impressions, which may be materially erroneous, for want of the explanations which a little more time may bring. Where friendships or dislikes are concerned, or questions of conduct are at issue, he makes his record under the influence of feelings which may bias him from the juster conclusions of a cooler hour. At all events, if his testimony is to be produced, when both he, and they who may be harmed by it, are no more, it is simply the testimony of a witness, who cannot be cross-examined, against one accused, who cannot speak for himself;—a kind of evidence, which no acknowledged principle or process of justice approves."*

I have presented these remarks, more because they seemed to be demanded by the general subject, than because of their necessity in order to a vindication of President Mather. His accusers are "enabled to speak with great certainty of his motives and master-passions," because they have got possession of his diary,

* No. III, p. 358.

or of certain parts of it; and under the shelter of such a caption, they proceed to charge upon him selfish, base, ambitious motives, in many of the more important transactions of his life. But does the diary bear them out in these accusations? Does President Mather record in his diary that he really was influenced by such motives as are imputed to him? Not at all; but frequently the very opposite. In repeated instances, as I might fully show, were it necessary to go into particulars, the diary assigns one motive for some transaction, and his accusers another; the diary assigns a good motive, and they impute a base and selfish one. Now what we complain of here is, that having appealed to the diary, they do not stick to it. They can quote the diary, so long as any thing can be found there which, judged of by our modern standards, can be turned into ridicule or reproach; but when the diary assumes another character, it can be readily dispensed with, or directly contradicted?

Finally, the accusers of Dr. Mather sum up his character in the following words: He was "restless, obtrusive, excitable, boastful of his public services, and disposed to complain of neglect and ingratitude." "He was a partizan by profession; always harnessed, and ready,

and restless for the onset; now courting the statesman; now mingling with the multitude; exciting the clergy in the synod, and the congregation in the pulpit, and the people in the halls of the popular assembly." In short, his whole life was "one series of theological and political controversy." "Violent doctrinal dissensions were by him excited and perpetuated in the churches," through a long course of years.*

And yet this is the man, whom Dr. Elliot describes as "the father of the New England clergy; whose name and character were held in veneration, not only by those who knew him, but by succeeding generations." This is the man who, to borrow the language of the general court, by "unwearied, indefatigable labor and service, voluntarily undertaken for the good of his country," performed without charge, "attended with much difficulty and hazard to his person," and followed by much obloquy from fiery demagogues,—saved Massachusetts from revolution and bloodshed, and gave to her a charter of government, under which she prospered for almost a century. This is the man who, by his resistance to unscriptural and alarming innovations, kept back the tide

* Quincy's History, Vol. I, pp. 147, 349.

of spiritual desolation from rolling over
churches of the Pilgrims, for a series of ye
and greatly restricted its ravages when
length, it came;—the man to whom, I th
New England is more indebted, ecclesiastic
and civilly, than to any other individual am
her sons;—the man who, when he died,
"honored with a greater funeral," says
eye-witness, "than had ever been seer
these parts of the world," and in consequ
of whose death, "the pulpits throughout
country rang with mingled eulogies and fun
lamentations." But further attempts at vi
cation would be superfluous. We leave
venerable President Mather to his rest.
will not be disturbed, nor will his reputa
permanently suffer by any attempts, at this
day, to tarnish and reproach it. The shaf
his revilers will be more likely to recoil,
fasten on themselves, than to fall injurio
on him.

CHAPTER VI.

COTTON MATHER.

THE individual of whom I am now to speak was the eldest son of Dr. Increase Mather, and grandson of the celebrated John Cotton; in consequence of which he was named Cotton Mather. He was born in Boston, Feb. 12, 1662. When a boy at school, he endeavored to persuade his youthful companions to become persons of prayer, and even wrote for them some forms of devotion. He had also the courage to "reprove his play-mates for their wicked words and practices." At the age of fourteen, he began to observe days of secret fasting and prayer; on which days he was accustomed to read deliberately and devoutly as many as fifteen chapters of the Bible. He entered college when but twelve years old, and graduated with distinguished applause, at the age of sixteen. At this early period, he matured and disciplined his understanding, by drawing up systems of the sciences, and writing remarks upon the books which he had read.

At the age of seventeen, he entered into covenant with the church, after a careful and most methodical examination of himself, and with the fullest consecration of his entire being to the Saviour. It had been his intention, almost from childhood, to become a minister of the gospel; but for a time after leaving college, his desires in this respect seemed not likely to be gratified. He had acquired, from some cause, the habit of stammering, which threatened to disqualify him entirely, as a public speaker. While suffering from this infirmity, he entered with great zeal upon the study of medicine, determined that if he could not, as a minister, be directly useful to the souls of men, he would endeavor to be useful to their bodies.

At length, however, he was enabled to overcome the impediment in his speech;* when he returned with renewed ardor to his theological studies, and commenced preaching before he was eighteen years of age. He was

* He overcame the disagreeable habit of stuttering or stammering, by following the advice of a Mr. Corlet, on old school-master, to this effect: "I should be glad if you would oblige yourself to a dilated deliberation in speaking; for as in singing no one stammers, so by prolonging your pronunciation, you will form the habit of speaking without hesitancy."

ordained colleague pastor of the North Church in Boston, in connection with his venerable father, May 13, 1684. In this situation he spent the remainder of his days, unwearied in his exertions to promote the glory of God, and the highest welfare of his fellow-men.

Mr. Mather was three times married, and had fifteen children, only two of whom survived him. But although he had so many bereavements in his family, he did not faint in the day of adversity. He thought that his chastisements should rather quicken than hinder him, in his various endeavors to do good.

Nothing could exceed the diligence and earnestness with which he entered on the task of educating his children, and training them up in the knowledge and fear of God. He commenced with them early, and prosecuted the work assiduously, fulfilling, perhaps to the letter, the direction of God to his ancient people: "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," Deut. 6: 7. His instructions and labors were all of them accompanied with fervent

prayer, and in respect to those of his children who came to years of maturity, they seem to have been followed with much success.

One of the earliest manifestations of the Christian life, in the case of Cotton Mather, was his desire to be useful. He commenced by instructing his brothers and sisters, exhorting the domestics in his father's house, and doing them every service in his power. He imposed it on himself as a rule, never to go into company where it might be proper for him to speak, without endeavoring to make himself useful. When very young, he commenced devoting a tenth of all his substance to charitable purposes; a practice which he continued—though the proportion of a tithe was often exceeded—to the end of life.

Mr. Mather seems to have anticipated, while a youth, that plans of usefulness, then unimagined, would ere-long be opened. "A vast variety of new ways to do good will be hit upon; paths which no fowl of the best flight at noble designs has yet known, where the vulture's most piercing eye hath not seen, and where lions of the strongest resolution have never passed." It was under the influence of impressions such as these, that he engaged in the composition of his well known work enti-

tled, "Essays to do good;" a work which Dr. Franklin read in younger life, and to which he ascribes "all the good that he ever did to his country, or to mankind."*

To increase the power of doing good, Mr. Mather devised a plan of voluntary association, very similar to that which is now in such active operation throughout the world. His method was, to have associations formed in every neighborhood, which should keep an eye upon all growing evils, and use the most effectual means to suppress them. He would have these societies engage in sending the Bible and the gospel to other nations, and in labors for the benefit of tradesmen, soldiers and seamen.

* In a letter to Dr. Samuel Mather (son of Cotton), dated Passy, France, Nov. 10, 1779, Dr. Franklin says, "Permit me to mention one little instance which, though it relates to myself, will not be quite uninteresting to you. When I was a boy, I met with a book entitled, 'Essays to do good,' which I think was written by your father. It had been so little regarded by its former possessor, that several leaves of it were torn out; but the remainder gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an influence on my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a doer of good, than any other kind of reputation, and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book."

There is scarcely a department of Christian benevolence, which has been thought of in later times, in which Mr. Mather, single-handed and alone, did not attempt to do something. He deplored the prevailing vice of intemperance, wrote and published much against it, and widely circulated some of his publications. Perceiving that the colored people (of which there were many at that time in Boston) had not those advantages of instruction which were necessary in order to their becoming interested in religion, he established a school in which they were taught to read. "And he himself bore the whole expense of it, paying the instructress for her services at the close of every week." He also published an essay on the importance of christianizing the people of color, designing "to lodge a copy in every family in New England that has a negro in it, and also to send numbers of them to the West Indies." He moreover exerted himself for the special benefit of seamen, though it may be feared without much success.

In order to systematize as much as possible his efforts to do good, Mr. Mather had a series of questions on the subject, for every day in the week. His question for Sabbath morning constantly was, "What shall I do, as pastor

of a church, for the good of the people of my charge?"

Monday morning, "What shall I do in my family, and for the good of it?"

Tuesday morning, "What shall I do for my relatives abroad?" Or, "What good shall I do for my personal enemies; and how shall I overcome evil with good?"

Wednesday morning, "What shall I do for the churches of Christ, and for the more general interests of religion in the world?"

Thursday morning, "What good may I do in the several societies with which I am connected?" "He was connected," says his biographer, "with above twenty societies of a moral and religious character; every one of which he would occasionally visit, to do something in them, and for them."

Friday morning, "What special subjects of affliction, or objects of compassion, may I take under my particular care; and what shall I do for them?"

Saturday morning, "What more have I to do for the interest of God in my own heart and life?"

These questions, it will be understood, came up for consideration, in regular succession, day after day, and year after year. Nor were

they dismissed with only a transient reflection. He was accustomed to go into them methodically and fully; and to perform the good, or at least to attempt it, which he regarded as within his power. Thus did Cotton Mather continually.

In labors for the good of the people of his charge, Mr. Mather was unwearied and abundant. He kept a list of all the members of his church, and "resolved that, in his secret prayers, he would go over the catalogue upon his knees, noticing each individual by name, and praying for the most suitable blessings he could think of, to be bestowed upon each person." He devoted more time than was usual at that day to the practice of visiting his people from house to house, conversing and praying with separate families. In the course of his visits, he distributed a great number of Bibles and other religious books. We are assured, on good authority, that he sometimes gave away more than a thousand a year; and this at a period when books for gratuitous distribution were less numerous, and much more expensive, than they are at present. Nor were his labors for the spiritual good of his people without success. During the first year of his ministry, says his biographer, no

less than "thirty declared before the church, that he was the cause, under God, of their awakening and conversion; and many, *many* (God knows how many), have since been, by his addresses to them, either by tongue or pen, brought home to God."

Mr. Mather had less to do with public, civil affairs than his father; and yet he was not entirely unoccupied in this way. At the time of the revolution, when Andros and his subalterns were stripped of their much abused power, he addressed a meeting of the inhabitants of Boston, dissuading them from acts of violence, and from all such excesses as would be injurious to their cause. At the request of some of the principal citizens, he also prepared a long written declaration, having the same object in view, which was read from the gallery of the town house. It was his interposition in this way as his son informs us, which "saved the fallen oppressors from a tragical fate; for had a single syllable been said by any man of influence, in favor of avenging the public wrongs on those who had inflicted them, they would have been put to death without mercy or delay."

Mr. Mather was of inestimable benefit to the inhabitants of Boston, and indeed of the whole

country, by his efforts to introduce among them the practice of inoculation for the small pox. He was opposed in these efforts by many of the clergy, and by all the physicians except one; but he persevered until the practice was introduced, and the advantages of it were generally acknowledged. The objections to inoculation which he had to encounter were chiefly of an ethical or theological character. It was not thought to be right to *create* a disease, with a view to *prevent* a disease. The practice was denounced, as a presumptuous and sinful tempting of God.

I close what I have to say as to the usefulness of Mr. Mather, and the pleasure he felt in doing good, with an extract from his own private writings. "I am able," he says, "with little study, to write in seven languages. I feast myself with the sweets of all the sciences, which the more polite part of mankind ordinarily pretend to. I am entertained with all kinds of histories, ancient and modern. I am no stranger to the curiosities which, by all sorts of learning, are brought to the curious. These intellectual pleasures are far beyond any sensual ones. Nevertheless, all this affords me not so much delight, as it does to relieve the distresses of any one poor, mean, miserable neighbor; and

much more, to do any thing to advance the kingdom of God in the world." His habitual conduct, adds his biographer, was altogether consonant to these declarations.

"In regard to literature, or an acquaintance with books of all kinds," says Dr. Chauncy, 'I give the palm to Cotton Mather. No native of this country had read so much, or retained more of what he read. He was the greatest redeemer of time I ever knew, and lost as little of it as any one could do, in his situation. There were scarcely any books written, but he had, somehow or other, got the sight of them. His own library was the largest, by far, of any private one on the continent. He was always reading or writing, and he had the happiest talent of going rapidly through a book. He knew more of the history of this country than any man in it; and could he have conveyed his knowledge with proportionable judgment, he would have given the best history of it." Thus far the testimony of Dr. Chauncy. And what he said in his day, I have no doubt may be said with equal truth now. In point of learning, in the stricter application of the term, as denoting a general acquaintance with books, Cotton Mather was the most learned man that New England ever bred.

Dr. Chauncy remarks above, that Mr. Mather "had the happiest talent of going rapidly through a book." His son informs us how he did this. "In two or three minutes turning through a volume, he could easily tell whether it would make any additions to his stock of ideas. If it would not, he quickly laid it by. If otherwise, passing over those parts which contained the things he had known before, and perusing those only which contained what was new. These he pencilled as he went along, and at the end reduced the substance to his common-place book, to be reviewed at leisure; and all this with wonderful celerity. Nor was his common-place book the only treasury of his rich ideas. It was but a security that he might not lose them. He had them at command, on the most sudden incidents, and in common conversation, which had, therefore, always something new, and was ever entertaining and instructive. It was by this means that he had the most agreeable and effectual way of reproving a friend for what appeared amiss, or of exciting to a neglected duty, that I ever met with. Instead of doing this directly, which might have been too offensive, he would bring some history or observation, in the form of a pleasant narrative, which he had ready at hand for all occasions; and

being extremely suitable, would leave his friend to the most pungent application."

As might be expected from much that has been said, Mr. Mather was most diligent and systematic in the improvement of time. He lived and worked very much by rule. Every day and hour had its assigned duties, and every duty its appropriate time and place. He had written in capitals over his study-door, to be seen and read by every visitant, BE SHORT. And yet, says his biographer, "when a friend came to see him, he threw all by, was perfectly easy, and made himself so very entertaining, that his visiter knew not how to leave him."

Mr. Mather had an extensive correspondence with philosophers and literary characters, in different languages, and in various parts of the world. In particular, he had a free correspondence with the celebrated Francké, a leader among the Pietists of Germany, and one of the founders of the university at Halle. He took a deep interest in this then infant university, and obtained important benefactions for it, both in this country and in England, He held a correspondence, also, with the Danish missionaries at Tranquebar, the most of whom were educated under Franckè, at Halle.

Although the contrary opinion may have been

entertained respecting Mr. Mather, he really was, considering the age in which he lived, a man of uncommon liberality of sentiment. It was a settled principle with him, as it had been with his father before him, "that the man who is a good neighbor, and a good subject, has a right to his life, and to the comforts of it; and that it is not his being of this or that opinion in religion, but his doing of something which directly tends to the hurt of human society, by which this right can be forfeited."

In the year 1710, the University of Glasgow conferred on Mr. Mather the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1713, he was elected a member of the Royal Society, London. His publications, in all, amounted to three hundred and eighty-three. Besides these, he left several large works in manuscript, among which was his "Biblia Americana, or the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, illustrated;"—sufficient of itself to make three folio volumes.*

It will be inferred from much that has been said, that Mr. Mather was a man of prayer. He was preëminently so. Besides his daily

*The manuscript of this great work is in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society; and ought to be published, either entire or in the form of an abridgement.

secret devotions, it appears from his diary, that he kept, in one year, no less than sixty private fasts, and twenty vigils. His son thinks that, on a moderate calculation, he kept between four and five hundred fasts, in the course of his public life. Indeed, he seems to have acquired the habit of turning almost every thing into prayer. The most common occurrences of life were made the occasion of lifting up his soul to God, in pious, appropriate ejaculations.

But with all this greatness and excellence of character, Cotton Mather had some weaknesses and imperfections. He was inclined to *vanity;* a disposition which was fostered, if not created, by the excessive praise which was lavished on him, and the high expectations which he knew were entertained respecting him, in youth. On the day when he left college, he was spoken of by President Oakes, publicly, in presence of himself and of a great assembly, in terms of honor which might have been expected to ruin him.*

Mr. Mather seems to have had more genius than judgment; more learning than taste; a

* "Cotton Mather! What a name! Or, I should rather have said, what names! I trust that in this youth, Cotton and Mather will be united, and again flourish."

greater facility for acquiring knowledge, than skill in arranging and employing it. He was naturally credulous, and was inclined to the marvellous, to a degree which exposed him to frequent impositions. His knowledge of human nature, having been acquired rather from books than from the living world, was necessarily defective; on which account his intercourse with the world was less useful, and, at times, less agreeable than might otherwise have been expected.

In the winter of 1728, he was seized with the disorder which terminated his life. In the note calling his physician, he made use of these words:—"My last enemy is come; or, I would rather say, my best friend." When asked by one of his church if he was desirous to be gone, he replied, "I dare not say that I am, nor yet that I am not. I would be entirely resigned unto God." When his physician expressed to him the opinion that he could not recover, he lifted up his hands, and said, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Taking the hand of his nephew,* who stood near him, he said, "My dear son, I do, with

* This nephew is supposed to have been the somewhat celebrated *Mather Byles*, Cotton Mather's sister's son, afterwards first pastor of the Hollis Street Church, Boston.

all possible affection, recommend you to the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Take my hand and my heart full of blessings." A few hours before his death, he remarked, "Now I have nothing more to do here. My will is entirely swallowed up in the will of God." When it came to the last, he said, "Is this dying? Is this all? Is this all that I feared, when I prayed against a hard death? O, I can bear this! I can bear it! I can bear it!" When his wife wiped his disordered eye, he said, "I shall be, in a few moments, where all tears shall be wiped away."

Indeed, the entire closing scene of this great and good man was triumphant and happy. He died, February 13, 1728, when he had just completed his sixty-fifth year. He was followed to the grave by an immense concourse of people, among whom were all the high officers of government. "It was the general sentiment," says one of his biographers, "that a great and good man had fallen."

CHAPTER VII.

COTTON MATHER, CONTINUED.—HIS ALLEGED CONNECTION WITH THE EXCITEMENT RESPECTING WITCHCRAFT.

HAVING briefly sketched the life and character of the Rev. Cotton Mather, it remains that I attempt to vindicate him, so far as this can be done consistently with truth, from some of the aspersions which, in our own times, have been heaped upon him.

The first and most formidable of the objections referred to, is that growing out of Mr. Mather's supposed connection with the subject of *witchcraft*. This, therefore, it will be necessary to examine at some length, and with care.

In the first place, I remark, that Cotton Mather was a sincere and earnest believer in the *reality*, and not unfrequent occurrence, of what, in his day, was denominated witchcraft. He also believed that the crime of witchcraft, when proved, was justly punishable with death. Nor was his faith in regard to these points at

all singular. It was the common faith of Christendom; and had been so for hundreds of years.

Persons who have not attended particularly to the subject, can have no idea of the extent to which the supposed crime of witchcraft has prevailed in different countries, and the multitude of deaths which it has occasioned. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, not only hundreds, but thousands were put to death,—many of them by the extremest tortures,—in Germany, France, and Spain, under the imputation of witchcraft. In 1612, fifteen persons were indicted and twelve executed, in Lancashire, England; and in 1634, seventeen more were put to death in the same county. The Rev. Thomas Cooper, one of the ministers of this county, in his "Mystery of Witchcraft," published in 1617, says, "Doth not every assize, almost, throughout the land, resound of the arraignment and conviction of notorious witches?"

Between the years 1644 and 1646, the celebrated witch-hunter, Matthew Hopkins, was encouraged and employed to visit different parts of England, ferret out those who dealt with familiar spirits, and in bringing them to justice. Through his instrumentality, sixteen

were executed at Yarmouth, fifteen at Chel
ford, one at Cambridge, several in Hunti
don, and sixty in the single county of Suff

In the year 1664, Sir Matthew Hale p
sided at the trial of two females in Suff
supposed to be witches, both of whom w
condemned and executed. At these trials,
Thomas Brown attended as a witness, v
"declared his opinion in favor of the realit
witchcraft, and entered into a particular
cussion of the subject before the jury."

Near the close of the seventeenth centu
many were tried and condemned in Engla
under the administration of Chief Justice H
It is stated by Mr. Upham, that in this cent
alone (the seventeenth), "more than two h
dred were hanged in England, thousands w
burned in Scotland, and large numbers p
ished in various parts of Europe," for the s
posed crime of witchcraft.

In the year 1670, eighty-five witches w
condemned in Sweden, the most of whom
not all, were burned and executed. Th
were also thirty-six children that ran
gauntlet, and twenty were whipped every S
day at the church door for three weeks tog
er, for the same crime.

About the middle of this century (the sev

teenth), a narrative of an alleged case of witchcraft was published in France, under the title of "The Devil of Mascon." The celebrated Robert Boyle "gave his sanction to the work, promoted the translation of it into English, and publicly declared his belief of the supernatural transaction it related."

Sir William Blackstone, the great oracle of British law, who died no longer ago than 1780, declared his belief in witchcraft in the following terms: "To deny the possibility, nay, the *actual existence* of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God, in various passages, both of the Old and New Testaments; and the thing itself, is a truth to which every nation in the world hath, in its turn, borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well-attested, or by prohibitory laws, which at least suppose the possibility of commerce with evil spirits."

In New England, at the time of Cotton Mather, the belief in witchcraft may be said to have been universal. The most experienced physicians who were called to prescribe for the afflicted persons, and the most eminent ministers who were invited to pray with them, did not hesitate to pronounce them bewitched. Even those persons who had the least sympa-

thy with the Mathers on some subjects, as Thomas and William Brattle, John Leverett, and Robert Calef, all agreed with them as to *the reality* of witchcraft.

In the year 1694, *two years subsequent to the executions at Salem*, a paper was issued by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, and signed, among others, by Samuel Willard, John Leverett and William Brattle, inviting observation and information concerning "*apparitions, possessions, enchantments and all extraordinary things*, wherein the existence and agency of the invisible world is more sensibly demonstrated."

Nor was the belief in witchcraft in this country confined to New England. In the early settlement of Pennsylvania, William Penn presided on the bench at the trial of two Swedish women for witchcraft, both of whom would have been condemned and executed, but for some technical error in the indictment.

The French and Dutch ministers of New York, when their opinion was asked by the Chief Justice of that province, replied in writing, "If we believe in no venefic witchcraft, we must renounce the Scripture of God, and the consent of almost all the world."

The last book that the celebrated Richard

Baxter ever published, was a treatise on the immortality of the soul, and the reality of the world of spirits, established by undoubted cases of *apparitions*, *possessions*, *witchcrafts*, &c.; and so late as the year 1720, Dr. Isaac Watts, in a letter to Cotton Mather respecting the Salem witchcraft, says, "*I am persuaded that there was much immediate agency of the Devil in those affairs*, and perhaps there were some real witches."

I have cited these testimonies for the purpose of showing at one view, how general, and I might almost say universal, was the belief in witchcraft, one hundred and fifty years ago. Cotton Mather was not singular in his opinions on this subject. He would have been singular, if he had indulged other opinions. He spoke the truth when he said, in his reply to Calef, "I know not that I have ever advanced any opinion, in the matter of witchcraft, but what all the ministers of the Lord that I know of in the world, whether English, or Scotch, or French, or Dutch (and I know many), are of the same opinion with me." If there was any difference between Mr. Mather and his cotemporaries on the point before us, it was perhaps this, that owing to his natural credulity and love of the marvellous, he was more sincere

and earnest in his belief than some of them a fact of considerable importance in this in quiry, and which, if duly considered, will go not to inculpate, but rather to excuse him.

It has been said, Cotton Mather was "th chief cause and promoter" of the allege witchcrafts in New England. He had a "efficient agency in producing and prolongin the excitement" on that subject. He "con nected his name and fame inseparably wit that excitement, as its chief cause, agent believer, and justifier."* The excitemer here referred to is, without doubt, that com monly spoken of as "the Salem witchcraft, which occurred in 1692. Of this, Cotto Mather is alleged to have been "the chie cause, promoter, agent, and justifier." H exerted "an efficient agency in producing an prolonging it." This certainly is a heav charge to be brought against a learned an reputable minister of the gospel, who has lon been dead. Let us spend a few moments i inquiring as to its justness and truth.

We have seen that in the days of Cotto Mather, the belief in witchcraft was universa in New England, as indeed it seems to hav

* Quincy's History of Harvard College, Vol. I, pp. 63, 65.

been all over the world. He did not originate this belief. He merely fell in with the general current of thought and feeling, which had prevailed here from the first settlement of the country.

It must be remembered, too, that the cases of witchcraft at Salem were not regarded at the time of their occurrence, as a new or unheard of thing. Accounts of witches in England, and in other parts of Europe, had been often published, and the stories and books were widely circulated. Then there had been cases of supposed witchcraft in New England, for almost half a century before the disturbances at Salem. There was a case at Springfield, as early as 1645; and another at Charlestown immediately after, which resulted in the execution of the supposed witch. The next that suffered was a woman in Dorchester, and another in Cambridge, both of whom died protesting their innocence. In 1665, Mrs. Hibbins, the widow of one who had been an assistant or counsellor, was executed at Boston. There were three executed at Springfield, nearly at the same time, one of whom confessed herself guilty of the crime alleged. All these cases occurred in New England, before Cotton Mather was born. In the year 1662,—the year of his birth,

there were three executed at Hartford; one of them on her own confession. There was a case at Salisbury, in 1669; another at Groton, in 1671; a third at Hampton, in 1673; and a fourth at Newbury, in 1679. In 1682, there were two cases in New Hampshire; and in the next two years, there were two more cases on Connecticut river. These latter cases varied much in their circumstances, and in none of them were the supposed offenders executed.

There was a notable case of witchcraft in the family of a Mr. Goodwin, in Boston, in the year 1688. The alleged offender was an old Irish woman, by the name of Glover. She was tried before chief justice Dudley (afterwards Governor Dudley), and was condemned and executed. This case, it has been said, was "brought about by the management" of Cotton Mather;* but a more unfounded accusation, perhaps, never was uttered. It is expressly contradicted by the testimony of Mr. Goodwin, the father of the afflicted children. "Let the world be informed," he says, "that when one of my children had been laboring under sad circumstances from the invisible world, for about a quarter of a year, I desired the ministers of Boston and Charlestown to keep a day

* Upham's Lectures, p. 107.

of prayer at my house, if so be deliverance might be obtained. Mr. Cotton Mather was the last of the ministers that I spoke to on that occasion; and though, by reason of some necessary business, he could not attend, yet he came to my house on the morning of that day, and tarried about half an hour, and went to prayer with us, before any other minister came. Never before now had I the least acquaintance with him." How then could this case have been "brought about by the management" of Cotton Mather? The child had been afflicted full three months, during which time Mr. Mather had not once visited the house, or had the slightest acquaintance with the family.

But to come back to the strange appearances in Salem village (now Danvers) which, as before remarked, commenced in February, 1692, and in the family of Rev. Mr. Parris, the minister. That Mr. Mather was "the chief cause" of these appearances, as has been confidently asserted, or that he exerted the slightest agency or instrumentality in producing them, there is not a particle of proof. After diligent search, I can find no evidence that he had any visible concern, or in fact any concern, with the cases of alleged witchcraft in Salem, until several months after the excitement commenced. Mr.

Upham supposes that this excitement originated in the parochial troubles of Mr. Parris; and that the children of Parris "were acting a part." "I am constrained," he says, "to declare my belief, that this dreadful transaction was introduced and driven on, by wicked perjury and wilful malice."* If this account of its origin be true, certainly Cotton Mather can no longer be regarded as its "chief cause, promoter and agent;" as it will not be pretended that he had any concern in fomenting Mr. Parris's parochial troubles.

But Mr. Mather is represented, not only as the cause of the Salem witchcraft, but as greatly desiring it, and rejoicing in it. "I cannot resist the conviction," says one, "that he looked upon the Salem trials with secret pleasure." "He seems to have longed for an opportunity to signalize himself in this particular kind of warfare."* "His boundless vanity," says another, "gloried in the assault of the evil angels upon the country."†

Were Cotton Mather now living to speak for himself, or could he address us from the other world, I am persuaded he would repel the foregoing representations, as doing great injustice

* Lectures on Witchcraft, pp. 51, 55, 106, 114,

†Bancroft's History of United States, Vol. III, p. 85.

› his character. How do his accusers know hat he longed for the occurrence of cases of vitchcraft; and rejoiced in them when they ıppeared; and regarded their terrible bloody esults with secret pleasure? Believing sinerely in the reality of witchcraft, or that cerain individuals were in covenant and commerce vith evil spirits, when an instance of this kind vas supposed to have occurred, he would feel .n interest, both as a Christian and a philoso›her, to investigate it with all the scrutiny of vhich he was capable. But to suppose that he lesired the occurrence of these terrible visitaions, and rejoiced in them, and contemplated heir results with secret satisfaction, even when hey terminated in blood, is to contradict, not ›nly his most solemn protestations, but the ;eneral current of his actions and life. He ıniformly spoke of the spring and summer of 692 as "a very doleful time unto the whole ;ountry," and of "the descent of the devils ıpon so many of the good people of the land" ıs a "dreadful judgment of heaven." His ›iographer informs us, that "for a great part of he summer, he spent one day, every week, by ıimself, in the exercises of a secret fast before he Lord," praying, "not only for his own ›reservation from the malice and power of the

evil angels, but also for a good issue of the calamities in which he had permitted the evil angels to ensnare the miserable country."

And if the general current of one's life is to be regarded as an index to the state of his heart, then Cotton Mather was a benevolent, and not a malevolent man. He desired the good of his fellow-creatures, and not their hurt. He was liable, like other men, to mistake in the application of means, and to be deluded; but he sincerely sought to be useful to those around him. But how is this consistent with his longing to witness, and rejoicing in the occurrence, of what he conceived to be the most dreadful of all calamities,—perpetrated by the most horrible of all crimes;—a crime justly deserving of death by the laws of both God and man?

It is further objected to Cotton Mather, that he favored the prosecutions for witchcraft, countenanced the executions by his presence, and in various ways urged on the terrible work of blood." "In the progress of the superstitious fear," says his accuser, "when it amounted to frenzy, and could only be satisfied with blood, he neither blenched nor halted; but attended the courts, watched the progress *of invisible* agency in the prisons, and joined

the multitude in witnessing the executions."* When the Rev. Mr. Burroughs was executed, he "rode round, in the crowd, on horseback," it is said, "haranguing the people, and saying that it was not to be wondered at that Mr. Burroughs appeared so well, for the devil often transformed himself into an angel of light."† It is further said, that in "the advices" which the ministers presented to the magistrates in reference to the matter of witchcraft, and which were drawn up by Cotton Mather, the magistrates were urged to "the speedy and vigorous prosecution of those who have rendered themselves obnoxious."

As to Cotton Mather's attending the courts, when the witches were tried at Salem, himself and his accuser are directly at variance. The latter says he did attend. Mr. Mather affirms that he did not. "I was not present," he says, "at any of them."

As to his frequenting the prisons where the witches were confined, he may have done this, when any were confined in Boston. To do so, in the case of all prisoners, he believed to be a part of his ministerial duty. There is no evidence that he visited the prisoners in Salem, or that he was often there, during the whole

* *Quincy, Vol. I, p. 64.* † Upham, p. 103.

excitement. It was more of a journey from Boston to Salem, in 1692, than it is at present.

As to his joining the multitudes in witnessing the executions, I find no evidence that this was true, except in a single instance. When Mr. Burroughs, with several others, was executed, on the 5th of August, he was there. He was not, as has been represented, "riding round, in the crowd, on horseback, haranguing the people;" still, he was there, and sitting on a horse. For certain reasons, Mr. Mather seems to have satisfied himself that Burroughs was, on many accounts, a bad man, a dangerous man;—that he had been unkind in his family; was one who had intercourse with evil spirits; and who, of course, according to his understanding of the matter, deserved to die. And when he saw how worthily the old man appeared at the last,—how submissive he was and how fervently he prayed; it is very likely he may have said to the bystanders, in the language of Paul, "No marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." This would be quite enough for such men as Calef and others, to make a story of; and is undoubtedly the substance out of which the several versions of the story have since been made.

In order to understand "the advices of the

ministers," above referred to, the history of the connected transactions must be kept in mind. As before related, the troubles in the family of Mr. Parris first made their appearance in February, 1692. During the next three months, cases of similar suffering were multiplied, and various persons were accused as being the cause of them. These accused persons were examined before justices Corwin and Hathorne, and the most of them were committed for trial. In May of the same year, Mr. Increase Mather and Gov. Phipps arrived from England, with the new provincial charter of government. Almost immediately after the new government had been organized, a commission was issued to seven of the principal citizens and jurists of the Colony, namely, Lieut. Gov. Stoughton, Maj. Saltonstall, Maj. Richards, Maj. Gedney, Mr. Wait Winthrop, Capt. Sewall, and Mr. Sergeant, constituting them a court, to try the accused persons, at Salem. The judges first assembled June 2d, and tried and condemned one, who was executed on the 10th. The court then adjourned to June 13th; in which interval, the governor and council asked the advice of ministers in Boston and the vicinity, as to the course to be pursued. After due deliberation, the ministers

expressed their opinions and counsels under the eight following particulars: 1. They express their sympathy with those who are "suffering by molestation from the invisible world," and "think that their condition calls for the utmost help of all persons, in their several capacities." 2. They thankfully acknowledge the success which has followed the efforts of the magistrates "to defeat the witchcrafts," and pray for a full and perfect discovery of all this mysterious wickedness. 3. They recommend "a very critical and exquisite caution, lest, by too much credulity for things received only upon the devil's authority, there be a door opened for a long train of miserable consequences." 4. The rulers are exhorted not to proceed, in any case, on mere presumption, and to show "an exceeding tenderness towards those that may be complained of, especially if they have been persons of an unblemished reputation." 5. The next advice is, that the primary examination of suspected persons may be without noise, company, or excitement; and that there "may be nothing used as a test for the trial of the suspected, the lawfulness whereof may be doubted by the people of God." 6. The ministers recommend to the magistrates not to convict or so much as commit persons on what

was called "the spectral evidence;" "inasmuch as it is an undoubted thing that a demon may appear, even to ill purposes, in the shape of an innocent and virtuous man." They also pronounce any "alteration made in the sufferers, by a look or touch of the accused," to be insufficient evidence of guilt. 7. The ministers farther suggest, whether an utter rejection of the testimonies commonly relied on, whose whole force and strength is from the devils alone, may not put a period unto the progress of the terrible calamity begun upon us, in the accusation of so many persons, whereof some, we hope, are clear of the great transgression laid to their charge." 8. Having given the above directions, suggestions and cautions, the ministers "humbly recommend to the government the speedy and vigorous prosecution of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the directions given in the laws of God, and the wholesome statutes of the English nation."

By those who seem inclined to traduce the ministers of that day, and especially Cotton Mather (by whom these advices are said to have been drawn up), this *last* article is almost the only one quoted or referred to. It is quoted often, as though it stood alone, without

any restriction or qualification; as if Mather and his ministerial brethren were only anxious to have the judges make all due despatch, and condemn and hang the suspected witches as fast as possible. But this, it will be seen, is altogether an unjust view of the case. These advices of the ministers are to be taken and judged of *as a whole;* and as a whole, they were manifestly framed and designed with a view to reprove much of the previous proceedings, particularly those of the Salem justices, and to prevent, so far as possible, the like proceedings in future. They do, indeed, "recommend the speedy and vigorous prosecution of those who have *justly* rendered themselves obnoxious;" but the recommendation is accompanied with such *cautions*, *restrictions* and *qualifications*, that, had they been duly regarded, there probably had not been another individual convicted. If the trials had been conducted with that "exceeding tenderness" towards the accused, which the ministers recommended; if the "spectral evidence," together with all improper tests, had been set aside; if all testimony of every kind, which rested "only on the devil's authority," had been rejected; the judges might have proceeded as vigorously as they pleased,—the

more vigorously the better, for by this means the jails had been the sooner emptied, and the accused persons had been set at liberty.

From persons who believed in the reality of witchcraft, and that the proper witch is justly liable to death (as all these ministers most seriously did), I see not how better advices than those which they proffered to the magistrates on this occasion, could reasonably have been expected. And happy had it been for all concerned, if the magistrates had been content to follow them. But they would not. At least, some of them would not; particularly Chief Justice Stoughton. He seems to have been fully satisfied, at least for a time, as to the validity of the "spectral evidence," and other branches of the devil's testimony; and consequently the work of hanging went on.

It has been further objected to Cotton Mather, that "after two hundred persons had been accused, one hundred and fifty imprisoned, nineteen hanged, one pressed to death, and twenty-eight condemned, one third of whom were members of the churches, and more than half of good general conversation, he wrote a formal treatise, entitled, 'Wonders of the Invisible World,' *approving the proceedings of the courts*, and exciting the multitude to

a continuance in their belief, and the courts to a *perseverance in their vindictiveness.*"*

With all due respect for the author of the foregoing sentence, I must say that the charge conveyed in the latter part of it is no better than *a libel;* and a libel not on Cotton Mather alone, but on Stoughton, Winthrop, Sewall, and all the other members of the court. That these men were deluded, and, under the influence of strong delusion, committed great injustice, I do not doubt. But that they were *vindictive* in their feelings and judgments, I do not believe. There certainly is no evidence of their vindictiveness, but all the evidence that has come down to us, goes to contradict directly such a supposition. Judge Sewall, in his humble confession, several years after, makes no acknowledgment of vindictiveness. Chief Justice Stoughton affirmed that, "when he sat in judgment, he had the fear of God before his eyes, and gave his opinion according to the best of his understanding; and although it might appear afterwards that he had been in an error, yet he saw no necessity of a public acknowledgment." Cotton Mather, speaking of the judges, says, "Although I was always

* Quincy, I, p. 64.

afraid of proceeding to condemn any person upon so feeble evidence as a spectral representation, and ever *protested* against it, publicly and privately, and in my letters to the judges, *besought* them that they would by no means admit it," yet, when "I saw in most of the judges, a most charming instance of prudence and patience, and knew the exemplary prayer and anguish of soul wherewith they had sought the direction of heaven, above most other people, I could not but speak honorably of their persons, on all occasions." In reference to these judges, the authors of the reply to Calef say, "What was done by them in the dark time of our troubles from the invisible world, all honest men believe they did in conscience of the oath of God upon them; and they followed, unto the best of their understanding, the precedents of England, Scotland and other nations, on such a dark and doleful occasion." Thus much in vindication of the judges from the charge of vindictiveness.

The other part of the charge, viz., that Cotton Mather, in his "Wonders of the Invisible World," "*approved* the proceedings of the courts, and excited them to a perseverance in their vindictiveness," is equally without foundation. For, in the first place, he did not

altogether approve the proceedings of the courts. This is evident from what has been already said; particularly from the contrariety of their proceedings, in the admission of testimony, to his private letters to them, and to the advices of the ministers, which he drew up. He further tells us expressly, "I could not allow the principles that some of the judges had espoused." In his "Magnalia," also, Mr. Mather expresses the opinion that the judges proceeded too far, and were chargeable with mistakes, particularly in respect to the kind of evidence which they admitted, and on which they, to some extent, relied. And if, as we have seen, the judges were not vindictive, it is impossible that Mr. M. should have excited them "to persevere in their vindictiveness."

There is another fact in the life of Cotton Mather, which is worthy to be mentioned here, and which shows that he did not altogether sympathize with the course pursued, in reference to those who were thought to be bewitched. "He offered, at the beginning, that if the possessed people might be scattered far asunder, he would singly provide for six of them; and he, with some others, would see whether prayer and fasting (without resort to *more* bitter methods) would not put an end

unto these heavy trials." Had this method been taken in the case of the sufferers, it is probable that the country had not been disgraced, and that not one of the accused had lost his life under the charge of witchcraft.

But it is further urged against Cotton Mather, that, not satisfied with the tragedy at Salem, he tried all methods to prolong the excitement, and, if possible, to renew the same scenes in Boston. It is even said, that "he got up a case of witchcraft in his own parish, in 1693." "He succeeded the next summer," says one, "in getting up a wonderful case of witchcraft, in the person of one Margaret Rule, a member of his congregation in Boston."* In proof that Mr. Mather endeavored to prolong the excitement respecting witchcraft, and, if possible, to renew the Salem tragedy in Boston, a private letter has been produced, addressed by him to Stephen Sewall, of Salem, dated Sept. 20, 1692, in which he requests his friend Sewall to send him "a narrative of the evidences given in at the trials," of some of the principal witches, which had there been recently condemned. His object in requesting such a narrative was, that

* Bancroft's Hist., III, p. 97. Upham, p. 289.

he might be the better able to meet objections against witchcraft, and defend (so far as he should find them defensible) the proceedings of his friends at Salem. "I am willing," says he, writing in his usual familiar, playful style, "I am willing, when you write, that you should imagine *me* as obstinate a Sadducee and witch advocate, as any among us. Address me as one that believed nothing reasonable. And when you have knocked me down, in a spectre so unlike me, you will enable me to box it about among my neighbors, till it come, I know not where, at last."

The accusers of Mr. Mather seem to understand from this letter, that having collected all the witch stories he could find, he intended to color and magnify them, and box them about among his neighbors, till they came at last to something, he could hardly tell what. But is this a correct interpretation of the letter? I am fully satisfied that it is not; and I am astonished that learned gentlemen should have so blundered upon it, as they seem to have done. What was it, I ask, which Mr. Mather proposed to box about among his neighbors? Not the witch stories which his friend Sewall might send him; but *the fallen spectre of Sadduceeism*, which Sewall had knocked down.

"When you have knocked me down, in a spectre so unlike me, you will enable me to box it (i. e. the fallen spectre) about among my neighbors, till it (the spectre) come, I know not where at last." Such is the strict, proper, grammatical meaning of the sentence; and it is very different, as every one sees, from the forced, perverted meaning which the accusers of Mr. Mather have put upon it. Mr. Mather was a firm believer in the reality of witchcraft, and, like most men of that age, he regarded the disbelief of it as a sort of Sadduceeism, which was little better than infidelity. This unbelieving spirit was working around him, and he sought the means of counteracting and overthrowing it. It was with this view, and not for the purpose of prolonging the excitement, that he wrote to his friend at Salem, for "a narrative of the evidence, given in at the trials of some of the principal witches, which had just been condemned."

That Mr. Mather had no agency in producing the strange appearances in Margaret Rule, is very evident from several considerations. 1. Calef does not charge him with it, or so much as intimate it. 2. He seems to have had no acquaintance with Margaret Rule, or knowledge of her, before her troubles com-

menced. But especially is it evident that Mr. Mather could have had no instrumentality in producing the troubles of Margaret, from the very nature of her disease. Her case, though regarded by many, at the time, as one of witchcraft, was clearly of a very different character. It was no other than a protracted case of delirium tremens, and other mental sufferings, occasioned by the habitual use of rum. For nine days together, she swallowed little or nothing, "except an occasional spoonful of rum." When her attendants were asked, "What does she eat and drink?" They answered, "She eats nothing at all, but drinks rum." No wonder she saw spectres around her, and seemed to persons not acquainted with such appearances to have been bewitched. If this is the right explanation of her case, as I have no doubt it is, then Mr. Mather will stand clear of having produced it, unless it can be shown that he persuaded her to drink rum and to become a drunkard.

In concluding the discussion respecting Cotton Mather's connection with the excitement respecting witchcraft, the following points seem to me to be well supported. Like most of the learned men of that age, Mr. Mather was a sincere believer in the reality of

witchcraft; and that the witch, on due and proper conviction, was worthy of death. He had no concern in getting up cases of witchcraft, in Boston, or Salem, or any where else; nor when they occurred, did he rejoice in them; but they were to him, as they were to most others at that day, events of solemn and painful interest. In regard to the cases at Salem, he was not in favor, at first, of legal proceedings, but preferred that the bewitched persons should be separated, and that religious means should be used for their recovery. And when judicial proceedings had been instituted, he was opposed to the admission of "the spectral evidence," or any other evidence which could be regarded as resting on the devil's authority. He privately wrote to the judges, beseeching them not to proceed on such evidence, and drew up cautions and restrictions, in the advices of the ministers, which, had they been duly regarded, would probably have saved the lives of all the accused. Nevertheless, believing the judges to be sincerely intent on doing right, he did not think it his duty to oppose and vilify them, though he disapproved of some of their proceedings. After the executions were past, at the command of Gov. Phipps, he prepared and pub-

lished a volume entitled, "Wonders of the Invisible World;" containing, with other things, an attested history of the trials of some of the principal witches.

Such are, in brief, the facts, in relation to Mr. Mather's opinions and doings with reference to the subject of witchcraft; and for one, I find little to censure, which may not be resolved into the peculiarity of his natural disposition, and the solemn belief which, in common with most at that day, he cherished, as to the reality of diabolical agency in the case. I would not, of course, undertake to defend every word he uttered, and every action he performed, during the whole of this perplexing business; but forgive him the wrong of his belief (if it be a wrong), and admit him to have been sincere and honest in his convictions; and I see little in what he did which does not, at least, appear consistent, and which, if it cannot be fully justified, may not readily be excused.

CHAPTER VIII.

COTTON MATHER, CONTINUED.—HIS CHARACTER VINDICATED.

THE aspersions which have been cast upon Cotton Mather do not all relate to the subject of witchcraft. Other objections have been urged against him, the more material of which will be briefly noticed.

It has been said, that Cotton Mather, like his father, was a violent controversialist. His "theological zeal was always at the boiling point." He was "a partisan by profession; always harnessed, and ready, and restless for the onset."* If the meaning of this charge is, that he did not always treat those who differed from him with due forbearance and courtesy, its truth is to be, to some extent, admitted. He well knew how to string words together, so as to make them thunder heavily on the ears, and grate harshly on the nerves, of an opponent; and he sometimes indulged himself

* Quincy, Vol. I, pp. 132, 137, 147.

in this way, beyond what the circumstances of the case required. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that Cotton Mather was, to a great extent, a controversial writer. Nearly all his three hundred and eighty-three publications were on devotional and practical subjects. He says of himself, "Though I have had, first and last, such a number of pamphlets thrown at me, that if I had been vulnerable, I might appear stuck as full of darts as the man in the signs of the almanack; yet, upon considering the sorry and silly stuff which they have consisted of, and the despicable character of the scribblers; and remembering, too, that lies have no legs, and what I had learned about treating insolent men with humility, and angry men with meekness; I have thought that Proverbs 26: 4, was a full answer for them.* I have had so much better work to spend my precious time in, that I don't call to mind I have ever once yet published a direct and formal answer to any of them all; but instead thereof, and once for all, I gave to the public my little book entitled, "The true Way of shaking off a Viper."

With respect to controversial asperity, as

* "Answer not a fool according to his folly," &c.

has been remarked in another place, much regard is to be had to the spirit and customs of the age. It will not do to take a writer out of his own age, and try and condemn him by the standards of another.

It has been said, again, that Cotton Mather was not always "so scrupulous as might be wished in his relation of facts;" or in other words, that he sometimes indulged himself in falsehood. And in order to make good this charge, his private letters have been searched, and his diary ransacked from one end to the other. But after a careful examination of all the instances referred to, I am satisfied that the charge is entirely without foundation. That there should be discrepancies in the private journals of different individuals, is of course to be expected. One writer might know what another did not know. One might record what another would omit. The same transaction would be likely to be viewed by different individuals, in different attitudes and lights. I have discovered no instance in the statements of Mr. Mather, which cannot be easily explained upon these principles, in perfect consistency with his veracity.

It is further objected to Cotton Mather, that he habitually desired and endeavored, for a

long course of years, to become the president of Harvard College. If this charge were admitted to the full extent to which it is urged, I see not that it will fasten any serious blot upon the character of Mr. Mather. Good men have often desired public stations, and taken pains to secure them, and yet, in the end, have been disappointed. I am persuaded, however, that the desires of Cotton Mather in regard to the presidency of Harvard College, have been vastly overrated. His diary has been searched as usual, to gather up expressions bearing on this point; and yet almost nothing, of a decisive character, has been discovered. On the death of President Leverett, there seems to have been a general expectation and desire, that Mr. Mather should be elected to the vacant office. As Dr. Elliot expresses it, "The voice of the people *cried aloud* for Mr. Mather; and it was declared, even in the general court, that he ought to be president." Mr. Mather was well acquainted with this fact, and refers to it in his private writings of this date. It is to be remembered, however, that these were private writings, intended not for the public eye, but for his own. Without doubt, he had written with less freedom, could he have known *to what* kind of scrutiny his papers, in after

times, were to be subjected. I do not find, however, in the diary, any indications of an inordinate desire to become president of Harvard College, or of inordinate grief or disappointment that he was not elected. So far from this, there are expressions of directly an opposite character; and if we are to receive the evidence of a diary, why should we not receive it all? "I have personally," says he, "unspeakable cause to admire the compassion of Heaven to me on this occasion. Though I have been a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, yet none of the least exercises that I have had withal, was the dread of what the generality of sober men expected I desired—the care of the College to be committed unto me. I had a dismal apprehension of the distresses which a call at Cambridge would bring upon me."

It has been matter of complaint against Cotton Mather, that he injuriously treated Gov. Dudley, particularly in addressing to him, as did his father before him, a letter of solemn admonition and reproof. In replying to this charge, I need not repeat what was said in a previous chapter, as to the character of Governor Dudley. He had tried to cultivate the friendship of the Mathers, so far as this was

consistent with his political designs; and had often availed himself of their influence and good offices, in times of difficulty and distress. At the time of the overthrow of Andros, Dudley probably owed his life to Cotton Mather; for had not he exerted himself to the utmost to calm the passions of the angry multitude, they had risen in their vengeance, and cut off their oppressors at a stroke. When Dudley, with his confederates, was imprisoned, he wrote to Cotton Mather, imploring his assistance "for rolling the stone from the door of this sepulchre, wherein," says he, "I am buried alive." At the time of his appointment to the office of governor, he had the address, as before stated, to procure a letter from Cotton Mather in his favor, which letter was read before the king, and had much influence in obtaining for him the office which he sought.

When Mr. Dudley arrived in this country as governor, he was received with tokens of respect by the Mathers, and by the people generally; but almost immediately, he began to manifest his ingratitude and his disposition to turn every thing to his own personal advantage. In a visit which he paid to Cotton Mather, soon after his arrival, he received *from him* the following faithful and excellent

advice:—"Sir, you arrive to the government of a people, that have their various and divided apprehensions about many things, and particularly about your own government over them. I am humbly of opinion that it will be your wisdom to carry an indifferent hand to all parties, if I may use so coarse a word as parties, and to give occasion to none to say, that any have monopolized you, or that you took your measures from them alone. I will explain myself with the freedom and the justice, though not perhaps with the prudence, that you would expect from me. I will do no otherwise than I would be done to. I should be content, nay, I would approve and commend it, if any one should say to your excellency, 'By no means let any people have cause to say, that you take all your measures from the two Mr. Mathers.' By the same rule, I may say without offence, 'By no means let any people say, that you go by no measures in your conduct, but by Mr. Byfield's and Mr. Leverett's.' This I speak, not from any personal prejudice against those gentlemen, but from a due consideration of the disposition of the people, and as a service to your excellency."

But having received this good advice, his

excellency went directly out, and misrepresented and distorted it, much to the injury of Mr. Mather. He went at once to Messrs. Byfield and Leverett, and told them that Cotton Mather had counselled him to be in no wise advised by them.

And this was but the commencement of his mal-practices. The first six or seven years of his administration were little else than a continued succession of criminations and recriminations; of disputes, encroachments, and complaints. Disgusted with his proceedings, and with the spirit and character which he exhibited, the Mathers at length concluded to write him, each of them, a letter on the same day. Considering the relations they had sustained to him, their former intercourse with him, the kind offices they had performed for him, and that he, in fact, obtained the government, in no small degree, through their means, they felt not only authorized, but called upon, to deal with him after this manner. On the letter of Increase Mather, I have already remarked. I proceed to subjoin some brief account of the letter of Cotton Mather, accompanied by such explanations as may be necessary.*

He begins by telling the governor, that he

* The entire letter, with Dudley's answer, may be found in Mass. Historical Collections, Series I, Vol. III, p. 128.

feels it to be his duty to give him some words of faithful advice, administered in so plain a manner, that they cannot well be misunderstood. He touches upon their previous intercourse; upon the favors which he had conferred upon his excellency, and the manner in which these had been requited. He reminds him of his former miscarriages, and of the hopes which were entertained, when he came into the government, that he had repented of them, and would do so no more. He speaks of the sore disappointment which his friends had experienced, and of the consequent troubles in which the governor himself had been involved. He proceeds to reprove him for his covetousness, —a sin of which, in the judgment of all his cotemporaries, Dudley was notoriously guilty. It was this which had led him into a species of bribery and corruption, to which some of the first men in the country had borne witness, under oath, and their affidavits were then in England. "And this it is," says the writer, "that many do firmly believe has drawn you in to countenance that unlawful trade with the enemy, which has been carried on by some grateful merchants."*

* Reference is here made to certain *treasonable practices*, of which Dudley, only the year before, had been accused to the Queen.

Mr. Mather proceeds to speak of the opposition of the governor and his son to the chartered liberties of New England,—an offence of which Mr. Bancroft testifies, and Hutchinson proves that he was actually guilty. He next speaks of the expedition against Port Royal, which he thinks had failed through the governor's mismanagement. He complains of the manner in which business is often transacted in the council. The members are not allowed to deliberate. They are hurried, *driven* into improper measures, the blame of which is then thrown upon the council. A day is sometimes appointed for the election of justices, and then privately altered, so that none may be present but those whose company is desired.

These things being so, it must needs be that the governor is under the Divine displeasure. There is a judgment to come, when he will be required to answer for the manner in which his duties were performed. Considering his age and health, his excellency ought to lose no time in thinking seriously on this subject, and supplicating the Divine mercy.

Mr. Mather further declares, that no usage shall ever induce him to lay aside the feelings of love and kindness, which he thinks it his *duty* to maintain towards all mankind. He

has often been silent, when he felt strongly inclined to speak. He has been neglected, and treated with contempt and aversion. Those who visited him have been insulted, though that act of attention was all their sin. Even those who live in the same part of the town have been proscribed for that, and for no other transgression. "But I cherish," says he, "no resentment. I can forgive and forget injuries. I hope I am somewhat ready for sunset; and the more so for having discharged the duty of this letter."

Such, for substance, is Cotton Mather's letter to Governor Dudley. It is less definite, methodical and guarded, than that of his father. It is more wordy and discursive, and betrays more of impatience, and a disposition to retort. As to the charges contained in it, the most and the worst of them were true; and the remainder were generally supposed to be true at the time. If any are disposed to think that Mr. Mather used too much freedom with the governor, let them bear in mind the former relations and intercourse which had subsisted between them; the numerous favors which the former had conferred on the latter; and especially the influence which Mr. Mather had exerted in procuring the appointment of the

governor, which had brought upon him, as he says, "an extreme displeasure in the country." Let them consider, too, that in the early days of New England, the minister and chief magistrate were more nearly on a level than they are at present; and that ministers were accustomed (perhaps because they were more faithful) to use a greater freedom in reproving wickedness in high places, than is customary now. I will not say that every word or sentence of the long letter which has been under review is to be approved; but I do say, that I more admire the boldness and faithfulness of the writer, than I can find it in my heart to censure his harshness. With a fidelity which reminds us of the old prophets in Israel, he tells the governor a great many truths, which probably no one else would, and points him forward to solemn future scenes which, in the midst of the cares and temptations of government, he was very liable to forget. On the whole, I think Dudley had more reason to be grateful for such a letter, than to be angry at it;—more reason to thank the writer for his faithfulness, than to rail at him (as he did) for his rudeness and impertinence.

It has been objected to Cotton Mather, that *he* was not friendly to the interests of Har-

vard College. He speaks of the College, during the presidency of Mr. Leverett, as "in a neglected and unhappy condition," and as "betrayed into vile practices." He complains of the commencement seasons, as "time sorrily enough thrown away,"—as "a senseless, useless, noisy impertinency." He speaks of the college as having no proper chartered existence, and of its curators and officers as without legal authority. He talks about the "pretended president," and "those called the overseers," and "the six men who call themselves the corporation." He sides with malcontents in opposition to the corporation; favors the establishment of Yale College; and labors to turn away the bounty of Mr. Hollis from Harvard to Yale.*

In reply to all this, it may be remarked, that several causes contributed to make Mr. Mather dissatisfied with the condition of the College, during the greater part of the administration of President Leverett,—perhaps more so than he ought to have been. It seems, however, that he was not alone in his feelings of dissatisfaction. The uneasiness increased and became so great, that in 1723, the overseers were induced to take the matter up, and by a commit-

* *Quincy's History*, Vol. I, pp. 224, 227, 330, 523, 585

tee of visitation, to make diligent inquiry into the condition of the College. In their report, this committee state, "that there is too common and general a neglect of the stated exercises among the undergraduates;"—that "there has been the practice of several immoralities; particularly stealing, lying, swearing, idleness, picking of locks, and a too frequent use of strong drinks; which immoralities, it is feared, still continue in the College;"—"that the scholars are many of them too long absent from the College;"—that they "spend to omuch of the Saturday evenings in one another's chambers;"—and "that the freshmen, as well as others, are seen in great numbers going into town, on Sabbath mornings, to provide breakfasts."

Only a few years later, another committee of the overseers reported, that "religion was much upon the decay in College; that the worship of God in the hall was by many scandalously neglected;" that "great disorders had appeared among the students;" that "gross immoralities" were prevailing; and that "the general condition of the College calls loudly for the interposition of the wisdom and authority of the overseers."

From these public documents, it would seem that Mr. Mather's impressions as to the state

of the College were not altogether without foundation. And the fact that he recorded them, not in a way of public accusation, but in his private writings, and as a matter of lamentation before God, cannot reasonably be urged as any objection to his character.

The disorders at commencement, about this time, were such as to defy all college authority and law. To prevent them, it was proposed to have private commencements. But this plan not being successful, the civil authorities were required to interpose, and to establish a patrol "on the evening of commencement day, and the night following, and in and about the entry of the college hall, at dinner-time, to prevent disorders." In view of a state of things such as these facts and records indicate, the public will judge whether Mr. Mather is greatly to be blamed, for describing the commencements as "time sorrily enough thrown away;" and for preferring, in some instances, to stay at home, and pray for the College, rather than patronize, by his presence, such a "noisy impertinency."

But Mr. Mather, it is sometimes said, used language, which implied that the College had no proper legal existence. And this was the exact truth respecting it. When the colonial charter was vacated, in 1684, the college charter, in

the judgment of all concerned, died with it. Nor could it be legally revived or reanimated, but by the royal authority. And hence the efforts which were made, through a series of years, to frame or procure a college charter, which should receive the approbation of the crown. But not succeeding in these efforts, Gov. Dudley undertook to revive, by mere provincial authority, the old charter of 1650;—a thing which could not legally be done, and of the impossibility of doing which, no man, probably, was more fully sensible than Dudley himself. Yet this rotten, illegal foundation was all the chartered foundation which the College had, during the times of which we now speak. No wonder, then, that Cotton Mather thought the College in a precarious and unhappy situation, as having no legal, chartered existence. No wonder that he sometimes spoke of Leverett as the "pretended president," and of the overseers and corporation as being such only in name.

The malcontent, with whom Mr. Mather is thought to have sided, in opposition to the corporation, was a Mr. Pierpont; who, having applied, in 1718, for his second degree, was refused, on the ground of certain allegations *brought* against him by a tutor. The corpora-

tion sustained the faculty, in their decision respecting Pierpont; upon which he immediately commenced a suit against the tutor, at common law. Of the particular circumstances of this case, no record has come down to us. It is certain that Mr. Mather sympathized with Pierpont, considering him as an "abused and oppressed man." It is certain, too, that Governor Shute, and both the Dudleys, and many of the overseers did the same. Indeed, the opposition to the course pursued by the faculty and the corporation had become so formidable, that it is hard to determine what the consequences might have been, had not the justices at common law, when the matter came before them, ordered the complaint to be quashed, and the defendant to be dismissed.

That Mr. Mather felt a deep interest in the establishment of the new college in Connecticut, and solicited for it the patronage of the Hon. Elihu Yale, intimating that his munificence might procure for it the name of Yale College, is all very true. But is this to be urged against him, as an objection to his character? Or should it not rather be recorded to his honor? He loved Harvard College, and had given it many proofs of filial affection and gratitude. No one can read its history, in the

Magnalia, and doubt this for a moment. But, unlike some men, his regards were not all circumscribed in a little circle around Cambridge. They were not to be confined to a single institution. He believed that a College was needed in Connecticut, and he felt disposed to assist it by such means as he had at his control.

That Mr. Mather ever attempted to turn away the bounty of Hollis from Harvard to Yale College, there is absolutely no proof. It seems that Governor Saltonstall, of Connecticut, enclosed to Mr. Jeremiah Dummer, of London, an anonymous letter to Mr. Hollis, "recommending to him the collegiate school at New Haven." But that Cotton Mather wrote this anonymous letter, there is not a particle of proof. And if he did write it, or whoever wrote it, it does not appear that the object of the letter was to withdraw the charities of Mr. Hollis from Cambridge, but merely to "recommend the collegiate school at New Haven." Mr. Hollis might have done all that he ever did, or thought of doing, for the college at Cambridge, and might have liberally assisted New Haven too.

Another objection to the character of Cotton Mather grows out of his alleged treatment of *President* Leverett. It is said, that in a letter,

written after the President's death, to Mr. Hollis, of London, he denominates him an "infamous drone." The alienation of feeling between the Mathers and Mr. Leverett commenced about the year 1698, and grew out of the controversy respecting the Brattle Street Church. The breach was widened through the influence of Governor Dudley, who, during the first half of his administration, seems to have made it an object to increase the prejudices existing between these men, and to profit by their differences. It is further likely that Mr. Leverett, though a good man and a Calvinist, was not that holy, spiritual, engaged Christian, which Mr. Mather would have liked to see at the head of the College. I infer this from his general course of life. He was first a preacher; then, for many years, a civilian; and after he came to the government of the College, he assumed the character of a minister again. Still, he was not such a minister as Increase Mather; nor did he labor as President Mather was accustomed do, for the conversion and salvation of his pupils. It was matter of earnest complaint with Chief Justice Sewall and others, during his presidency, that he did not expound the Scriptures to the students in the college hall. Still, I am of opinion, that the

expression quoted above from Cotton Mather's letter to Mr. Hollis, was altogether too strong, and quite inexcusable. President Leverett could not, with any propriety of language, be called a drone,—much less "an infamous drone."

It is possible that Mr. Hollis did not read Mather's letter right, not being able to decipher his chirography. He complains, in one instance, that he could not read the letters of the first Professor Wigglesworth;* and I suspect that Cotton Mather's letters were quite as unreadable as his. This conjecture is the more probable, because the expression, as reported by Hollis, is not in keeping with the ordinary state of feeling subsisting between Mather and Leverett, for a course of years. To be sure, there was but little cordiality between them; still, their feelings were not openly hostile. They often met and deliberated on questions of interest, and were in the habit of exchanging, pleasantly, the usual courtesies of life. We find their names appended frequently to the same public documents. Mr. Mather placed his son at Harvard College, during the period of which we speak, with a handsome letter of introduction to the President. He also encouraged the young men of his congregation,

* See Pierce's History of Harvard University, p. 154.

in seeking an education there. In one of his letters to President Leverett, he says, "It is a satisfaction that I can reckon sixteen or seventeen of the sons of the church whereof I am the servant, who belong, at this time, unto the College." I believe, also, that at the funeral of President Leverett, Mr. Mather officiated as one of the pall-bearers. We can only say, therefore, in regard to the offensive expression quoted above, that possibly there may have been some mistake, and that Mr. Mather never wrote it. But if he did, it must have been written by him in one of those seasons of hypochondria and depression, to which he was subject in the latter years of his life; as it certainly is not consistent with the general state of his feelings towards Mr. Leverett, during his presidency.

It has been further objected to Cotton Mather, that at the time of the revolution, in 1689, he sternly resisted the wishes of the people, in not being willing that the old colonial charter should be set up and restored.* But if this was true of Cotton Mather, it was equally so of nearly all the magistrates and principal men of the colony. The old magistrates were willing to assume, as they did, a temporary

* Bancroft's *History* of the United States, Vol. III, p. 71.

provisional government, under the old charter, and to act upon it, till they could hear from England. But they were not willing, of themselves, to undertake to restore the charter. They could not do it. They all wished it might be restored; but it must be done legally. It must be restored, if at all, by that same royal authority through which it had been forcibly taken away.

To sum up all; It has been represented that Mr. Mather was a man of "malign" and "vehement passions;" of "violent," "never-sleeping animosity;" and of a "self-glorifying spirit," who would "resort to underhand measures to gratify himself;" that he was characterized by "violence of passion, frequent coarseness of language, and deficiency of judgment to a degree, at times, scarcely reconcilable with common sense;" that his spirit "was restless, violent, selfish, and passionate, craving distinction, and claiming it by every form of self-illustration and display;" that through the faithful medium of history, he "must be transmitted, as an individual of ungovernable passions, and of questionable principles; that he was credulous, intriguing and vindictive; often selfish as to his ends; at times, little scrupulous in the use of means; wayward, aspiring, and vain; rendering

his piety dubious by display, and the motives of his public services suspected, by the obtrusiveness of his claims to honor and place." In fine, it is said that "he disgusted his cotemporaries," and "became the frequent subject of ridicule and derision;"* that he fell "into such disgrace," says another, that "he became the object of public ridicule, and open insult."†

In proof of the last of the charges here urged, viz. that Mr. Mather "became, at length, the object of public ridicule and open insult," reference is made, not to any thing of which the public had knowledge, but (as usual) to his own private writings, his diary. In the the latter part of his life, this diary was often penned in seasons of severe domestic affliction, and (what is more) under the influence of deep mental depression, which led him to suspect insult where none was intended, and to construe every thing pertaining to himself in the most unfavorable light. It is remarkable, that at the very time when he was led to record, in his diary, the severest things against himself, he was actually in the highest favor with a large portion of the religious public. It was at this very time that he was a prominent

* Quincy's History, Vol. I. pp. 137—237, 330—345.

† Upham's Lectures on Witchcraft, p. 115.

candidate for the presidency of Harvard College; when, as Dr. Elliot says, "the voice of the people cried aloud for Dr. Mather, and it was declared, even in the general court, that he ought to be president.

But the most perfect refutation of the charges before us is found in the general mourning which was occasioned by his death; in the circumstances of his funeral; and the many testimonies to the high excellence of his character, which were given, at the time, by his cotemporaries. He died, as before stated, Feb. 13th, 1728, when he had just completed his 65th year. "He was followed to the grave," says Mr. Peabody, "by an immense procession, including the Lieut. Governor, the honorable council, the representatives, and all the high officers of the province." "The streets," says Dr. Elliot, "were crowded with people, and the windows filled with sorrowful spectators, all the way to the grave. It was the general sentiment, that a great man had fallen." The mourning was compared by some of the ministers, to the mourning of the children of Israel, on the death of Aaron. Funeral sermons were preached for him in most of the churches in Boston; where his brethren in the ministry—his cotemporaries—

stood up in the midst of his cotemporaries—those among whom he was born, and with whom he had always lived, and who were perfectly acquainted, both with his weaknesses and excellencies,—and gave him a character, in terms and manner following.

"Thus lived and died, Dr. Cotton Mather," said Mr. Thatcher in his funeral discourse, "the glory of learning, and the ornament of Christianity."

"The capacity of his mind," said the Rev. Mr. Gee, "the readiness of his wit, the vastness of his reading, the strength of his memory, the variety and treasures of his learning, in printed works and in manuscript; the splendor of virtue which, through the abundant grace of God, shone out in the tenor of a most entertaining and profitable conversation; his uncommon activity, his unwearied application, his extensive zeal, and numberless projects of doing good;—these things, as they were united in him, proclaimed him to be a truly extraordinary person."

"One of the most elegant compositions of those times," says Elliot, "was a funeral sermon upon Dr. Cotton Mather, by Dr. Benjamin Colman." In this sermon, Dr. Colman says: "We mourn the decease from us (not his

ascension to God) of the first minister of the town;—the first in age, in gifts, and in grace, as all his brethren very readily own. I might add, it may be, without offence, the first in the whole province and provinces of New England, for universal literature and extensive services. Yea, it may be, among all the fathers in these churches, from the beginning of the country to this day—of whom many have done worthily—yet, none of them amassed together so vast a treasure of learning, and made so much use of it, to a variety of pious intentions, as this our reverend brother and father, Dr. Cotton Mather." "His printed works will not convey to posterity, nor give to strangers, a just idea of the real worth and great learning of the man. His works will, indeed, inform all that read them, of his great knowledge, and singular piety, his zeal for God, and holiness, and truth, and his desire of the salvation of precious souls. But it was his conversation, and acquaintance with him in his familiar and occasional discourses and private communications, that discovered the vast compass of his knowledge, and the projections of his piety more, I have sometimes thought, than all his pulpit exercises. Here he excelled; here he shone; being exceedingly

communicative, and bringing out of his treasure things new and old, without measure. Here it was seen how his wit and fancy, his invention, his quickness of thought, and ready apprehension, were all consecrated to God, as well as his heart, will, and affections, and out of the abundance within, his lips overflowed—dropped as the honey-comb—fed all that came near him; and were as the choice silver, for richness and brightness, for pleasure and profit."

The Rev. Mr. Prince, after quoting the foregoing passages from Dr. Colman, adds: "Every one who intimately knew Dr. Mather, will readily subscribe to the above description. By his learned works and correspondence, those who lived at the greatest distance might discover much of his superior light and influence; but they could discern these only a more mediate and faint reflection. They could neither see, nor well imagine, that extraordinary lustre of pious and useful literature wherewith we were every day entertained, surprised, and satisfied, who dwelt in the directer rays—the more immediate vision."

"Great abilities, an insatiable thirst for all kinds of knowledge, an extraordinary quickness of apprehension, liveliness of fancy, with a ready invention, and active spirit, seemed to

be the chief ingredients of his natural genius. And all these, being sanctified in his early days, endued with a divine bias, and turned to the noblest objects; he became inflamed with the most ardent desires to amass unto himself, from all sorts of writings, an unbounded treasure of curious and useful learning, and to find out all imaginable ways of employing it, for the glory of God, the good of men, and the advancement of his own perfection; that as he grew in knowledge, he might increase in goodness and usefulness, and become a greater and more extensive blessing."

"So much erudition, such high degrees of piety, and such an active life in doing good, united in the same person, are very rarely seen among the sons of men. By a transient acquaintance with him, one would think that, being sanctified from his birth, he had made the utmost improvement of his time in the pursuit of knowledge. But upon a farther view of the social part of his life, the continual resort of visitants, with his gentle and easy entertainment of them at all hours, and how he would scarce let the meanest or youngest pass him without instruction; it seemed as if almost all his time were swallowed up with conversation. And yet, being let into a more

intimate discovery of his numberless and perpetual contrivances and labors to do good in the world; one would then be ready to conclude that he would have no time left for either, but must have spent it all in action. I cannot think to wish a richer blessing, than that the God of the spirits of all flesh would, in my own dear country, and every other, raise up numbers of such ministers as this; that they may burn and shine as he, and prepare the world for the most illustrious appearance of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ."

In an obituary notice of Cotton Mather, published in the Boston News Letter, he is described as "the principal ornament of his country, and the greatest scholar that was ever bred in it. Besides; his universal learning, his exalted piety and extensive charity, his entertaining wit, and singular goodness of temper, recommended him to all, who were judges of real and distinguished merit."

Such then was the man, in the estimation of his cotemporaries—those among whom he lived and died—who, by certain writers in the 19th century, is represented as possessing some of the most odious traits of moral and intellectual character—the worst features both

of mind and heart; who is declared to have forfeited all consideration and influence in the community, and to have become, at last, "the object of public ridicule, and open insult." My readers must judge between Mr. Mather's cotemporaries, and his modern traducers, both of whose testimonies have here been given. Which had the opportunity to know him best? Which are to be regarded as the most competent judges of his talents, his learning, his piety, his usefulness, and his moral worth?

It is admitted, indeed, by one who has uttered the severest charges against Mr. Mather, that his cotemporaries endeavored "to draw a veil over his failures, wherewith to cover his defects and infirmities;" but "time," he says, "has lifted that veil, and thrust aside that mantle, which the tenderness of friends and professional interest desired to spread." The public will judge, however, whether the funeral and mourning above described, and the testimonies above given—spontaneously given—are not something more than an effort to draw a veil over infirmities and defects; whether they are not evidence, full and decisive, as to the estimation in which Cotton Mather, after a life of more than sixty years, the whole of which was spent in Boston, was held by the Bostonians of

that day. It deserves consideration, too, whether it is, indeed, time that has lifted the veil, and thrust aside the mantle above referred to; or whether this mantle has not been torn aside by rude and officious hands, to be replaced, in due course of time, with brighter colors and in smoother folds.

In this and the two previous chapters, I have presented a brief sketch of the life, labors and character of Dr. Cotton Mather. I have also wished to vindicate his character against some of the aspersions which, it has seemed to me, have been unjustly heaped upon it. I have not represented him as a perfect man; for he was not so. He had his foibles and his faults, of which no one was more sensible than himself, and which he took no great pains to conceal; so that they occasionally stand out, with considerable prominence, in his writings, and in his own personal history. Still, he was a holy man—a highly gifted man—an eminently learned and useful man—an honorable and honored son of New England—whose reputation should be dear to the present sons of New England, and which it devolves on them to guard and defend. I conclude the chapter, with repeating a sentence before quoted from the testimony of the Rev. Thomas Prince: "I

cannot wish a richer blessing, than that the God of the spirits of all flesh would, in my own dear country, and in every other, raise up numbers of such ministers as Dr. Cotton Mather, that they may burn and shine as he, and prepare the world for the most illustrious appearance of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER IX.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MATHER FAMILY.

Our acquaintance with the Mathers would be incomplete, were I not to append a brief sketch,—such as the meagre accounts that have come down to us permit,—of some of the remaining members of this remarkable family.

I have previously said something of the Rev. Nathaniel Mather, son of Richard, and brother of Increase. There was another Nathaniel Mather, son of Increase, and brother of Cotton, who died young, and who, we are assured, was a very remarkable youth. He was born July 6, 1669; and from his child-

hood, says his brother Cotton (who was his tutor), "his book was dearer to him than his play. As he increased in years, I was often forced to chide him *to* his recreations, but never *for* them. To be bookish was natural to him; and to be plodding was easy and pleasant, rather than the contrary. Indeed, he afforded not so much a pattern, as a caution to young students; for it may be truly said that study killed him. His candle would often burn after midnight, until, as he used to say, he thought his bones would all fall asunder.

"While he thus devoured books, it came to pass that his books devoured him. His weak body could not bear the toils to which he used himself; and his neglect of exercise, joined with his immoderate lucubrations, soon destroyed his digestive powers; so that by the time sixteen winters had snowed upon him, he began to be distempered with pains in his joints, which were at last to him the gates of death."

His success in study was according to the measure of it, *great*. He was thoroughly prepared for college at the age of twelve years; soon after which we hear it said of him, that he had accurately read through the Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New in

Greek, and was able to converse familiarly in Latin. He was distinguished for his attainments, not only in languages, but in mathematics, philosophy, history, theology, and rabbinical learning. He graduated at the age of sixteen, at which time he delivered a Hebrew oration, on the state of learning among the Jews.

The natural disposition of this young man was exceedingly amiable. He was condescending and obliging—always more ready to confer a favor, than others could be to ask it.

But it is specially to be recorded of him, that he became early and devotedly pious. At the age of fourteen, he entered into solemn covenant with God, writing out the instrument at length, and subscribing it with his own hand. The concluding part of this interesting paper is as follows: "I renounce my own worthiness, and choose thee, as the Lord my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom, and take thine for my guide. I take thy will for my will, and thy word for my law. I do here willingly and joyfully put my neck under thy yoke. I do subscribe to all thy laws, as holy, just, and good; and do promise to take them as the rule of my thoughts, words and actions. And because, through frailty, I am subject to

many failings, I do protest here before thee, that unallowed miscarriages, which are contrary to the constant bent of my heart, shall not disannul this everlasting covenant."

The future life of Mr. Mather was in strict accordance with this solemn transaction. The leading features of it are summed up by his biographer under the following heads:

1. He was one that walked *by rule*. The rules by which he lived were all written, and many of them put into verse, so that they might be the more easily remembered.

2. His was pre-eminently a life of prayer. He prayed much in secret, and was accustomed to meet the pious young men of his acquaintance in a stated prayer meeting. Indeed, prayer had become so habitual to him, that he not unfrequently engaged in it in the hours of sleep. His very dreams, often, were made up of prayers.

3. He was a very thoughtful, contemplative young man. Not a few of his meditations were committed to writing. The following on the connection between soul and body, may serve as a specimen. "The Lord does not require me to neglect the body, but to have my body for a few days or years—I say *few*, for they cannot be many—to be wholly at the

service of my soul; and to be willing that the union between them should be dissolved; the soul taking its flight to everlasting bliss; the body being laid in the dust, until the resurrection in the last day. With my body I must expect to lose all the pleasant enjoyments of this world—liberty, library, study, and relations; and yet, in a higher sense I shall not lose them. So far from losing liberty by dying, I shall gain it,—even freedom from this body of sin. As for my library, if I die in Christ, I shall not need it. My understanding shall be enough enlarged, and I shall no longer need to turn over books for learning. My study is now a pleasant place, but the paradise of God above will be larger, better, more complete. As to my pious relatives on earth, I shall only go before them to heaven; and if any of them are not pious, the longer I stay with them, the pain of leaving them will be the more intolerable, to think that I part with them for ever.

4. It may be said of this thoughtful, prayerful young man, that he strove against sin, and especially against his easily besetting sins. Nor did he struggle and strive in vain. The Lord gave him the victory.

5. He seemed to have a presentiment that his life was to be short, and was very diligent and faithful in his preparation for death.

His last sickness was a very painful one—a malignant tumor in the lower part of the back, extending to the thigh and leg; but he bore his sufferings with most exemplary patience, and submission to the Divine will. Those who waited on him often said, "He has an iron patience, we never saw so patient a patient." He died October 17, 1688, while his father was absent on his agency in England.

A brief memoir of him was published by his elder brother and minister, Cotton Mather, which went through several editions on both sides of the water. A considerable part of the first edition was purchased by Mr. Philip Henry, for charitable distribution. To the fourth English edition, a most instructive and highly characteristic preface was prefixed, by the celebrated Mathew Mead, author of the "Almost Christian." "I could not read the book," says Mr. Mead, "without great reflection and shame: For, thought I, God will not gather his fruit till it is ripe; therefore I live so long. Nor will he let it hang till it is rotten, therefore Nathaniel Mather died so soon. We are not sent into the world, merely to fill

up a number of years, but to fill up our measure of grace; and whenever that is done, our time is done; we have lived to maturity. And so did this dear youth. He came to his grave, in a full age (though at nineteen), and fell like a shock of corn in his season."

SAMUEL MATHER.

The Samuel Mather of whom I now speak, was the third and youngest son of Dr. Increase Mather. He was instructed in classical learning by his elder brother Nathaniel, and was with his father in England, at the time of Nathaniel's death. The following is part of a letter which he wrote to his afflicted friends on that mournful occasion. "When I parted from him (Nathaniel) not a year ago, I hoped it would not have been my last farewell; but I now lament my unhappiness, in that I gained no more by him. And yet I must acknowledge that the little understanding which God has given me in the Hebrew or Greek tongues, was by that brother as the instrument; so that I shall have cause whilst I live to honor his memory. I cannot but know, that if I should not fear and serve the God of my brothers, and of my fathers, and of my grandfathers, the

nearest relatives I ever had in the world will be witnesses against me at the last day."

It is doubtful whether this Mr. Samuel Mather ever returned from England to America. He received his first degree at Harvard College, in the year 1690, but it was probably sent to him, as he could not have been present in Cambridge at that time. He became "a faithful and useful minister of the gospel, at Wilney, in Oxfordshire." "He was the writer," says Cotton Mather, "of several valuable treatises; among which his 'Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity,' and his 'Vindication of the Deity of the Holy Spirit,' and his 'Vindication of the Sacred Scriptures, shine forth with a particular lustre, and challenge a name for him among the blessings of this age."

SAMUEL MATHER.

This Mr. Samuel Mather was grandson of the Rev. Richard Mather, of Dorchester, but in another line. He was the son of Timothy Mather; was graduated at Harvard College in 1671; and was ordained pastor of the church in Windsor, Conn., in 1682. This, it will be recollected, was the church which first settled

Dorchester, Mass., and early removed with its pastor, the Rev. John Warham, to commence the settlement at Windsor. It had long been in a broken, divided state, but was happily united under Mr. Mather, and so continued through the whole of his ministry. He was a highly respectable and useful man. We find his name among the trustees of Yale College, from the year 1700 to 1724.

SAMUEL MATHER, D. D.

This is the last of the name that I shall introduce to the notice of my readers; and with a brief sketch of his life and labors, shall conclude what I have to say of the Mather family. He was the son of Dr. Cotton Mather, the only son that survived him, and was born A. D. 1706. In his early youth he visited Europe; but how long he remained there, or how extensively he traveled, does not appear. He entered College when only thirteen years of age, and graduated at seventeen. In the year 1732, four years after his father's death, he was ordained over the same church to which his father and grandfather had so long ministered, as colleague pastor with the Rev. Mr. Gee. Previous to this he had been a preacher for several years, and some of his sermons ahd been published. In 1729, he published

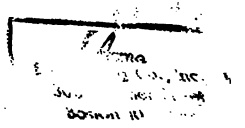
the life of his father,—an instructive and interesting volume.

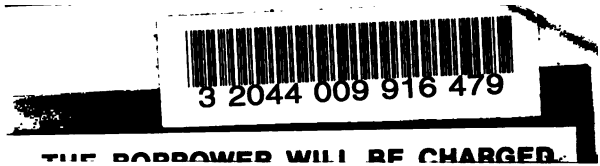
During the revival controversy, which occurred about ten years after his settlement, the Old North church was divided; a majority, with the senior pastor, remaining in the usual place of worship, and the minority, with Mr. Mather, withdrawing to another place. The separation was effected by mutual agreement and consent. A house of worship was erected for the new church, in North Bennett Street, and with this people Mr. Mather continued, as long as he lived. He died June 27, 1785, aged 79. He was a man of learning, of piety, and sound orthodoxy, though not a powerful or captivating preacher. His disposition was amiable, and his habits retiring and unobtrusive, as appears from the circumstances of his funeral, which, by his direction, was strictly private. He was disinclined to controversy, though capable of undertaking it, whenever he saw the interests of truth in danger. His principal publications, besides the Life of his father, were "an Apology for the Liberties of the Churches of New England," and his Reply to Dr. Chauncy on Universal Salvation. This was his last work, and was published only a few years before his death. He received a diploma of doctor of divinity from Harvard College, in 1773.

It was unfortunate for Dr. Samuel Mather, that his cotemporaries could hardly avoid drawing comparisons between him and his more distinguished ancestors. In almost any other connection, he would have been esteemed (what he really was) a man of learning and talents, of piety and worth, a highly respectable and useful minister of the gospel. But the difference between him and his father and grandfather has led, on the part of many, to an unjust and too unfavorable estimation of his character.

His church seems to have been scattered, after his death, and his place of worship passed into the hands of the Universalists, with whom it has since remained.

He was the last of his family who, for a long time, and perhaps to the present time, has been distinguished among the ministers of New England. Dr. John Elliot remarks, in 1809; "For more than a century, the name of Mather was known and celebrated in every part of the land. Many branches of it are now cut off, and we must go out of the State of Massachusetts to find one engaged in the work of the ministry; though formerly so many of them were distinguished among the angels of the churches."





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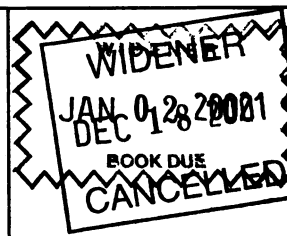

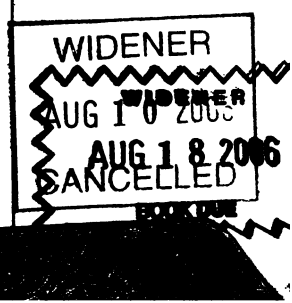

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